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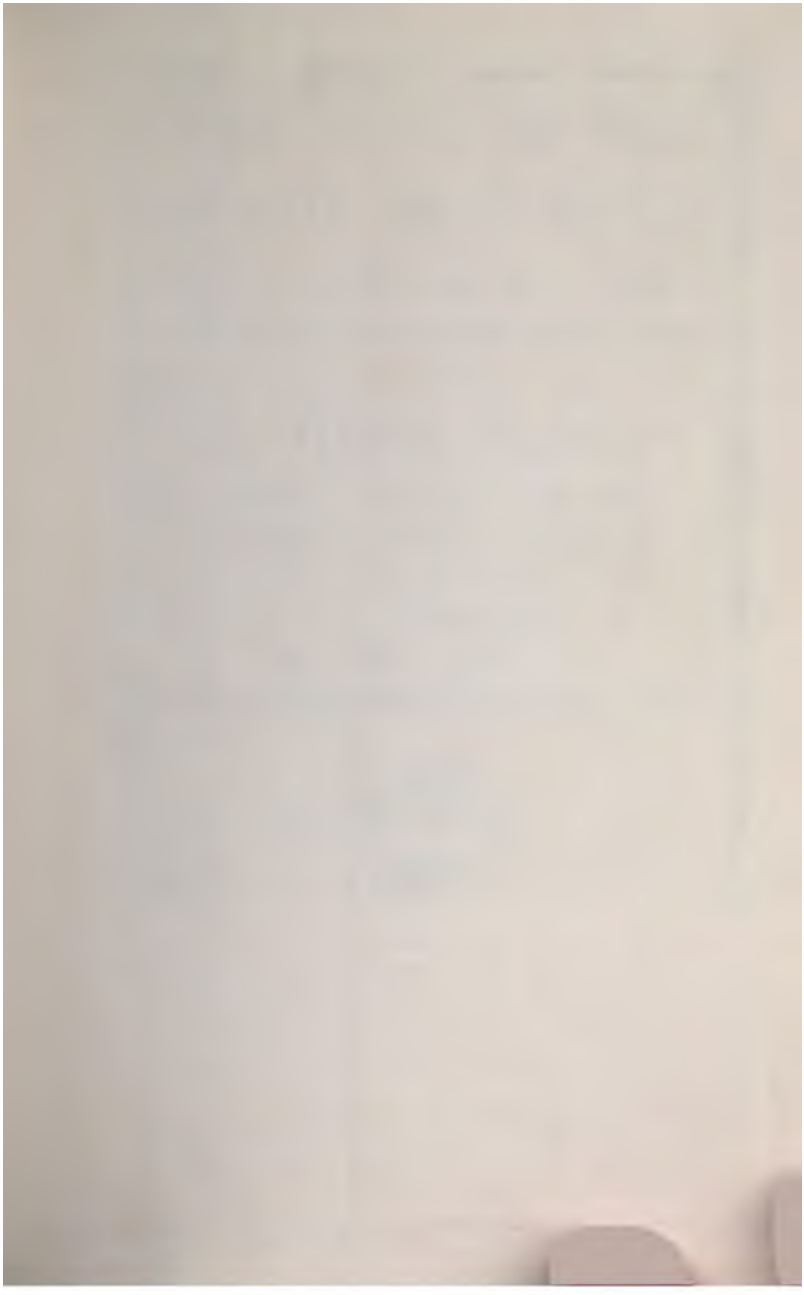

THE MATE OF THE GOOD SHIP YORK

Or, The Ship's Adventure

By

W. Clark Russell

Author of "The Wreck of the Grosvenor," "Marooned," "A Marriage at Sea," "My Danish Sweetheart," etc.

With a frontispiece by

W. H. Dunton

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The Mate of the Good Ship York

Or, the Ship's Adventure

CHAPTER I.

JULIA ARMSTRONG

A HOUSE with a wall, which would be blank but for a door and two steps, stands in a very pretty lane. The habitable aspect of the house is on the other side, and commands a wide prospect of sloping fields and river and green sweeps soaring into eminences thickly clothed with trees. A brass plate upon this lonely door bears the simple inscription, "Dr. Hardy."

The lane runs down to a bridge, and the flowing river carries the eye along a scene of English beauty: the bending trees sip the water's surface; the bright meadow stretches from the bank, and is tender and gay with the tints and movement of cattle; lofty trees sentinel the lane, and in the early summer the notes of the thrush and the blackbird are clear and sweet.

One autumn evening, at about seven o'clock, the door bearing Doctor Hardy's plate was pulled open, and a young fellow, with something nautical in his

lurch and dress, stepped into the road, and began to fill his pipe. Immediately behind him appeared another figure — he was a thin, pale, gentlemanly-looking man, and his white hair was parted down the middle. He gazed with a great deal of kindness, not unmingled with the shadow of sorrow, at the young fellow who was filling his pipe, and said:

"You have a pleasant evening for your walk."

"I am sorry to leave this place," said the young man. "There is nothing like this to be met on the open ocean." And whilst he pulled out a match-box his eyes went away to the green, evening-clad hills, which showed between the trees in a sweep of sky-line pure as the rim of a coloured lens; and now two or three of the stars which shine upon our country, and which we all know and love, were trembling in the dark blue of the coming shadow.

The young man lighted his pipe with several hard sucks not wanting in emotion.

"God bless you, father," said he. "I shall be turning up and finding all well within twelve months, I hope."

"God bless you, my dear son, and I pray that he may continue to watch over you," said the white-haired old gentleman in a shaking voice.

The young man started to walk with his face set toward the hill. Doctor Hardy stood in the doorway watching him until he had disappeared round the bend. He then stepped back and closed the door upon himself.

It would not be dark for a little while, and even when the dusk came up over the hills a piece of

moon would float up with it. The water flowing in the valley lay in short lines and sweet curves in a moist dim rose. A clock was striking; a wagon was rumbling in a weak note of thunder past some low-lying hedge that skirted a road. The young fellow stepped out leisurely with his pipe hanging at his teeth; he was going away to London and was walking to the station, and was without even a stick. He was square, robust, a nautical type of young man, clean shaven, of a cheerful cast of face, but with something singular in the expression of his eyes owing to the upper lids being mere streaks and scarcely visible, and the coloured matter black and brilliant, so that when he stared at you his look would have been fierce but for the qualifying expression of the rest of his face. He walked with a slight roll of the sea in his gait, and if you had noticed him at all you might have supposed him a sailor. Yet a man need not be a sailor to look like one. I have met nautical-looking men who would not be sailors for the value of the cargoes of twenty voyages. On the other hand, I have met sailors who, had they called themselves greengrocers' assistants or tailors' cutters, would have been believed.

This young fellow, smoking his pipe and walking along through the fine autumn-gathering evening, was the only son of the white-haired gentleman who had just withdrawn into his house. He had been to sea since he was fourteen years of age, and his name was George Hardy, and he was now chief mate of the *York*, an Australian clipper, twelve hundred and fifty tons burthen, then lying in the East India Docks. He was going to join her, and why he was without baggage was because he had sent his chest aboard in advance.

Formerly the railway station stood not very far distant from Doctor Hardy's house; but all about here was unimportant — it was more a district than a place. Hardy's patients, for instance, were scattered over miles, and, like the plums in a sailor's pudding, the houses were scarcely within hail of one another. The railway company, two years before this date, removed the station seven miles higher up the line, to the great consternation of the unfortunate man who had purchased the "Fox Railway Inn," then conveniently seated within a short walk of the station. Figure his horror when one morning he saw men with pickaxes uprooting the platform. The "Fox Inn" was left as desolate as Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat, and it needed three men to go through the bankruptcy court before matters began to look a little brighter for this unfortunate tavern.

There was plenty of time, and Hardy did not walk very fast. He enjoyed the sweets of the country, all the aromas of the darkling land which came along in the faint, cold, evening air. When a sailor arrives from a long voyage he makes up his mind to button the flaps of his ears to his head, and to steer a straight course for the deepest inshore recess. He does not do so because he usually brings up at the nearest grog-shop on his arrival, or makes his way to the boarding-house where he was robbed and stripped when he was last in the place, and in a short time he is away at sea again with no clothes but what he stands up in, and no bed but the bundle of hay or straw which he flings, with curses deep as the sea and dark as the ship's hold, down the hatch under which he sleeps. But it is an illustration of

his hatred of salt water that he should resolve to bury himself deep inshore when he lands.

George Hardy did not belong to the class who live in boarding-houses and wear knives on their hips. He was the son of a gentleman, he was a man of taste and feeling which his seafaring life had heightened and enlarged; he had the eye of an artist and the spirit of a poet, and was too good for a calling that does not require these qualities.

The road for about four miles was very lonely. One little cottage on the right stood in an orchard and grounds which sloped to a hedge almost three-quarters of a mile down. He met nobody; once or twice a squirrel ran across the pale dust; the birds had gone to bed, there was no song; the sun had sunk, and the evening had deepened into the first of the night.

Suddenly, some distance ahead of him on the left, Hardy spied what was undoubtedly a human figure. It lay in a dry, shallow ditch with the upper part of its body a little raised, resting upon the bank under the hedge. As he approached he saw that it was a woman, and then that it was a girl in a straw hat with nothing near her in the shape of bag, bundle, or dog. She must be some wearied wayfarer who had seated herself and fallen asleep. But he did not believe this, either; on the contrary, when he was close to the figure he imagined it to be a corpse.

He put his pipe in his pocket, and stood looking at her. There was light enough to see by, but not very distinctly. He stooped and peered, and then started and exclaimed:

"By Jove, it's Julia Armstrong! What's come to her?"

He looked up and down the road; not a soul was in sight. He felt her ungloved hands — they were cold. Her straw hat was tilted on her head, which rested not on the brim of her hat but on her hair, that was dressed in a mass behind and pillowed her. Her eyes were not closed, and if she was not dead she was in a swoon. He got beside her and lifted her head, all the while wondering what she was doing — dead or in a faint — in this ditch. He then pulled out a small flask of brandy diluted with water, and as her pure white teeth lay a little apart he managed to pour a dram into her mouth. He chafed her hands, and in a sort of way caressed her by holding her to him. He also put her hat straight, and wetting his handkerchief with a little brandy and water he damped her brow, now taking notice that she was not dead by sundry tokens of life of a most elusive and subtle character, whereof her breathing was not one, for he could not detect a stir of air on the back of his hand betwixt her lips, nor the faintest heave of her pretty breast.

She was Julia Armstrong, and, strange to say, an old love of his — I mean, he had lost his heart to her a little time before he went to sea, when he was scarcely more than a schoolboy. Then he went to sea, and when he came home she had gone somewhere on a visit, and so of the next voyage; but when he returned from his fourth trip round the world he met her, and found the old beautiful charm again in her; but in a week she left to occupy some post as a governess thirty miles away, and when they met again it was here by this roadside.

What had captivated the young fellow with this girl who lay unconscious in the fold of his arm? She had a pleasant, interesting face, beheld even through the death pallor that lay upon it; but she was not beautiful or even pretty. Her hair was abundant and fair, inclining, as you might even judge by that light, to auburn. But it was not her face nor hair, it was her figure that had excited admiration into passion in the young sailor. Her shape and involuntary poses were saucy and perfect beyond expression. She always carried her hat on one side of her head — "cock-billed," as the sailors call it; she had a trick of planting her hands on her hips; her limbs were beautifully shaped, and her short skirts exposed as much or little of them as her figure required. No dancer of exquisite art could have played her legs as this girl did, yet all her movements were involuntary and unconscious, and therein lay the sweetness, for had a hint of study been visible in her motions the whole maidenly and fairy-like illusion would have hardened into acting.

Young Hardy had thought of the Vivandière, of the Fille-du-Regiment, when he looked at her. He could not have told you why. Was it the sauciness, that was not wanton, of the repose of her hands upon her hips? the unconsciously crossed leg when standing? the cock-billed hat, or tam-o'-shanter, that made you feel the need of music? the fixed gaze that was not staring but pensive? the sudden change of attitude that was like the cloud shadow upon a rose on which the sun had rested? What had all this to do with the Vivandière? But Hardy had got the word and the idea into his head, and

when he thought of her at sea 'twas as though she was walking with a regiment with a little barrel of cordial waters upon her back.

Again he looked up the road and then down the road; he could hear a cart in a lane that ran parallel, but nobody was visible. He was beginning to wonder what he was to do — whether he had the physical strength to carry this fine girl in his arms four miles, that is, to his father's house — when she sighed, stirred like an awakening sleeper, sighed again, and opened a pair of gray eyes full upon his face.

"Do you know me?" he asked.

"Where am I?" she answered, and with a sudden effort she raised her form out of his arm, but in a moment fell back again in sheer weakness.

"Don't you remember your old friend George Hardy?" he said.

She looked at him with that sort of intentness which you will sometimes see in a baby's eyes, and her lips drooped into a scarcely perceptible smile.

"What am I doing here?" she asked, and she gazed round her, deeply puzzled.

He gave her a little more brandy, which she certainly stood in need of, and looking at her without speaking, he waited until more mind came into her face; and now she made an effort to rise.

"Keep still until you have come right to," said he. "I wish some old cart would come along to give us a lift to my father's."

"Your father's?"

"Doctor Hardy," he answered. "About an hour's walk away."

"Yes, I know," she exclaimed. "If a cart came I would not go."

"My dear Miss Armstrong, what are you doing here?" exclaimed young Hardy. "All alone in a dead faint in a ditch! Were you returning home?" And again he looked a little way up and down, thinking to see a handbag or a parcel, but her hands were as empty as his.

"I'm going to London," she said. "What time is it?"

"I'm going to London, too," said he; "but neither of us will catch the train we want. Do you mean to walk to London?"

She shook her head, and put her hand in her pocket as though seeking her purse. What she sought was evidently there.

Now her faculties had come together, but it was clear she must sit a little longer before attempting to rise; so they sat side by side with their feet in the dry ditch, and their backs against the hedge.

"Why are you going to London?" he asked.

"I'm leaving home for good," she answered.

"Where's your luggage?"

"I have none," she replied.

"Are you running away from home?" he inquired, beginning to see a little into this matter.

"I have no home, and I am leaving my father's house of my own accord," she replied, animated by a little faint passion. "I could endure the life no longer — I am the wretchedest girl in the world. Oh, how his wife has treated me! *You* once met her."

She struggled with her heart, and some tears ran down her face.

It is true that Hardy had met this stepmother — this second Mrs. Armstrong — and he had then

gathered that the lady and Miss Julia did not lead the lives of angels in each other's company. In short, he had heard that Mrs. Armstrong, by her drink, by her language, and conduct in general, had made a very hell of Captain, or Commander, Armstrong's home for his daughter. The captain was retired, was poor, and Mrs. Armstrong had brought him a hundred a year, which was a godsend. He took life very easily, drank his whisky, smoked his pipe, and was welcome at several houses in the neighbourhood, where at one he would get billiards, at another a rubber, at a third a gossip in which he related his China experiences; and the whisky bottle always kept him company, though his kindest friend could never say that in all his time he had seen him drunk once. Doctor Hardy was on good terms with him, but spoke with strong dislike of Mrs. Armstrong, and of her treatment of her daughter, that was driving her into seeking and taking situations, some of a menial sort, and that threatened before long to break her heart or to send her to the bad, as 'tis called. But with domestic troubles of this sort people do not choose to concern themselves, except in exaggerating them in talk by scandalous hints and opinions.

"I must wait for something to pass that will help me to carry you to my father's house," said Hardy, looking anxiously at the girl whom he could not fail to see was weak and exhausted.

"I have already declined," she answered. "I will not return a single yard in that hateful direction. I shall feel stronger presently. Is there not another train later on?"

"Not to London."

"I must not miss this," she exclaimed, struggling to rise.

"Look here," said he, keeping her down by gentle pressure of the hand, "I am going to London and we will go together, but we shall have to wait until to-morrow. Will not that suit? If you are in a desperate hurry you can leave early to-morrow. Do you know Bax's farm?"

"Of course I do," she answered, turning her face up the road.

"Bax shall give you a bedroom," said he, "since you refuse to return with me to my father. A good supper and a good night's rest are the doctoring you stand in need of. I find you in a dead faint in a ditch, and so you come under my care, and I am answerable for you. We are old friends."

She faintly smiled and looked at him.

"You will do exactly what I ask, and at Bax's farm we shall have leisure for a little talk."

She bowed her head, and he saw that she cried again.

They spied a man at the bottom of the hill coming up. The girl started, and said, "I am quite strong enough to stand and walk," and she stood up, one of the most beautiful figures amongst women, with a sweet ingenuous sauciness which was the flavouring grace of her happy hours, distinguishable still, even in this time of misery and illness. The man coming along was a common labourer, but she did not choose that any one should see her sitting in a ditch.

They walked slowly up the road. She leaned upon his arm and occasionally stopped to rest, and their talk until they arrived at the farm was not much;

indeed she said little more than that she had been making up her mind for some weeks to leave her father's house for ever and to sail to a colony, where she would be willing to accept the lowest menial office so long as she was independent, and received the respect that was due to her as a lady. She had left her home that day in the afternoon, meaning to walk to the station and take the train to London, whence she intended to write to her father to forward her clothes in the box which stood ready corded in her bedroom. When she had walked some distance — it might be five miles — a sudden faintness seized her, and she sat down under a hedge to rest. She then must have fainted, and knew no more until she returned to consciousness, and found herself resting against Hardy.

This talk brought them to Bax's farm.

It was not a farm, though it was called so. Bax sold milk and garden produce and eggs, and the countryside called his house a farm. It had two gables and a thatched roof, small latticed windows, and a door that opened direct into the sitting-room. In the summer the house was enchanting with its flowers and shrubbery and the climbing green stuff about it, and then the concert of the woods thrilled in the trees beyond, and the air was full of sweet smells.

Bax was a man of about sixty, immensely stout behind and in front, with a face that seemed powdered with pale, scissors-shorn whisker, and small eyes which had drowned their lustre in beer. He stood in the doorway in his shirt-sleeves smoking a pipe, and was not at all surprised when the couple passed through the gate and approached the porch. He merely pulled out his pipe, and said:

"Good evening, Mr. Hardy; good evening, Miss Armstrong. Come for a bit of a sit down? Will y' 'ave chairs here? or the sitting-room's at your sarvice."

"How d'ye do, Mr. Bax?" said Hardy.

"Good evening, Mr. Bax," said Miss Armstrong, in a faint voice.

"Take us into your sitting-room," said Hardy; and they entered the door and were in the sitting-room at once — a cosy little room, hung with portraits of Bax and his dead wife and daughter, decorated with a small mantel-glass in fly-gauze, and hospitable with a round table on one leg and three claws, the top beautified by a knitted cover.

Julia sank into a little armchair. Bax was beginning to gaze at her earnestly; he knew her perfectly well, knew her father also, who frequently looked in for a drink; also he knew Hardy perfectly well, likewise his father, who attended him when he was attacked by gout.

"Mr. Bax," said Hardy, putting his cap down upon the table, "we have come to occupy your house this night."

"Joost been married, have yer?" asked Bax, slipping his pipe into his waistcoat pocket.

"No," answered Hardy, gravely; "Miss Armstrong is leaving her home for good. If you don't guess why, I'll tell you presently."

Bax looked knowing; he looked more knowing an instant later when a fine Persian kitten ran up his back and curled its tail upon his shoulder, for then two pairs of eyes were fastened upon Hardy, the kitten, being no beer drinker, gazing more steadfastly than the other.

"Have you a bedroom that you can place at Miss Armstrong's disposal?"

"Is there no later train?" asked Julia.

"We would not take it if there were," replied Hardy.

Of course Bax, having lost his wife, must consult his daughter, and when he had opened a door and shouted a little for Mary Ann there arrived a woman who looked old enough to be Bax's mother. Her face seemed to be dredged by time; the *arcus senilis* was more defined in her than in Bax; she looked seventy years old, and was but thirty-eight.

She curtseyed to the visitors, and then, after pursing her lips and knitting her brow, she replied to her father that Miss Armstrong could have the spare room over the sitting-room.

"Can I have a bedroom?" said Hardy.

Bax mused, looking at his daughter, and then said, "Not unless you sleeps along with me."

"With you?" laughed Hardy, looking at his stomach. "How much of you lies in bed all at once? That'll do for me," said he, and he jerked his head at a wide hair-sofa.

The father, the kitten, and the daughter looked a little strangely at Hardy and Julia Armstrong, as though before proceeding they wanted to see things in a clearer light. Hardy understanding this, spoke out with the bluntness of a sailor.

"Look here, Bax," said he, "I'm going to London to join my ship. I was bound away to-night, but on the road I fell in with this young lady, who lay in a swoon."

"Oh, dear, poor thing!" groaned Miss Bax.

"She came to, and I brought her here after learn-

ing that she was leaving her home for good on account of the barbarous behaviour of her step-mother — "

"Oh, I know, I know," interrupted Miss Bax.

"She was walking to catch the train I was bound by; she is not in a fit state to travel, Bax. *You* can see that, ma'am; therefore she shall sup under this comfortable old roof, and take the rest she needs in the room you offer her. Her train leaves at ten in the morning, and we will take it."

The kitten purred as it fretted Bax's cheek. Bax said, "It's all right, Mr. Hardy, and you shall be made comfortable. What 'ull you 'ave for supper?"

What would be better than some cold ham and a dish of eggs and bacon, a dish of sausages in mashed potato, and the half of a beautiful apple tart, along with a jug of real cream? And for drink there was some first-class ale kept by Bax for Bax himself, for he held no license, and his dealings were secret, and if he took money it was a gift for a kindness.

"Will you come up-stairs and see your room, Miss Armstrong, before I goes about and gets your supper for you?" exclaimed Miss Bax.

"Have you got no baggage?" inquired old Bax, jerking the kitten on to the table.

"It will follow me to London," said Miss Armstrong, and she rose and went up-stairs with Miss Bax.

Hardy sat down upon the sofa, and Bax went to work to lay the cloth. There was plenty of room at that little table for two. Bax had been a gardener in a great family, and had often helped the coachman, the footman, and the butler to wait. He possessed some good old-fashioned table apparel, and

before Miss Armstrong returned the room looked bright and hospitable with the light of an oil lamp reflected in cutlery, glass, and cruet-stand.

Julia entered, and Bax walked out. She went and sat beside Hardy, and the lovely Persian kitten sprang into her lap. Her hair was as beautiful as her figure, and her gray eyes were full of heart and meaning. You could not have called her pretty, yet you were sensible of a charm in her face that had nothing to do with the shape of her nose or the character of her mouth.

"Do you feel better?" said Hardy.

"Much; I never thought to find myself stopping a night here. Of course, I have been the means of your losing your train?"

"To-morrow will do just as well," he answered. "Where did you mean to sleep when you got to London to-night?"

"I should have found a room," she answered.

"Will they send on your luggage if you write for it?"

"Father will," she replied. "Yes, he will do that, but he will not write to ask me to return. He does not care what becomes of me. He never cared what I did when I left his house to fill a situation."

Her nostrils enlarged, her eyes looked angry. A little blood visited her pale cheek. Hardy's memory pictured her father: a middle-sized man with pale, weak eyes, a chuckling laugh like the gurgle of liquor, much reference to his ships and to naval things in general, a large Micawber-like indifference to his existing circumstances, and a quality of talkativeness about outside matters, such as the queen,

the trouble at Pekin, the discovery of the North Pole, which would make you think that he did not know what home worries were.

"Bax," said Hardy, "may covertly send along to let them know you are here."

"What of that?" she exclaimed. "If they were to send twenty men they would have to drag me to move me. I would not set foot in that house again if my stepmother lay dead in the gutter opposite the door. It is my father's fault."

She bit her lip, stroked the kitten, and said, "Oh, it is hard upon a girl to have a bad father — a weak, selfish, foolish father."

Here Bax came again with a tumbler full of autumn flowers. He placed them in the middle of the table and went out, looking nowhere, as if he walked in his sleep; but whilst the door lay open they heard the spitting of the frying-pan.

"What are you going to do when you get to London?" said Hardy.

"I mean to find a situation on board a ship," she answered.

"What situation do you expect to find?"

"I shall try to get a post as stewardess, or as an attendant upon a sick person. I cannot pay my passage out even in the steerage, therefore I must work."

"Now, Miss Armstrong," said Hardy, stroking the kitten's head on her lap, "it is impossible for me to be rude to you because I want to be, and mean to be, your friend." She looked at him swiftly, and her eyes drooped. "Do not misjudge any questions I may put to you. How much money have you got?"

"Seven pounds, twelve shillings, and —" she

drew out a little purse, opened it, counted some coppers, and added, " fourpence."

" What is that money going to do for you in London? " said Hardy, after a pause of pity.

" It will support me," she answered, " until I have obtained a situation on board a ship."

" Situations for girls on board ships are very few," said he. " What part of the world do you want to sail for? "

" Anywhere, anywhere," she replied. " But it must be to some place where I can get a living."

" It would not do to sail for China," he exclaimed. " India doesn't provide much for people whose wants are yours. It must be the Great Pacific colonies. Aren't there agents and institutions which help young girls to get away across the sea? This we will inquire into when we arrive in London."

She looked at him gratefully, and was about to speak, but was interrupted by Miss Bax, who staggered in with a tray load.

CHAPTER II.

BAX'S FARM

GEORGE HARDY and Miss Julia Armstrong sat down to supper at the little round table; Bax lurked as if he would wait; Hardy said they could manage very well without him, and the pair fell to. The window was open, and all the rich, decaying perfumes of the autumn evening floated into the atmosphere, and sweetened it with the incense of the night.

Hardy looked at his companion, and felt again the delight he used to take in the contemplation of her shape. The same old suggestion was in her — that of the Vivandière. But why? He could not have explained, and neither can I. Every movement was full of beauty and piquancy, and she wore her hair parted a little on one side.

"Is your bedroom comfortable?" asked Hardy.

"A sweet, old-fashioned little room," she said, "and the bed's a four-poster. It has curtain rings, and if I tremble in bed they will rattle, and I shall think it the death-tick, which I hate to hear. Will that sofa make a comfortable bed for you?"

"You are asking a sailor that question," he answered. "I would be glad to carry it to sea with me, and sleep all around the world in it. Have you written a farewell letter to your father?"

"No; I have left him as a spirit might, in utter silence. His wife will not let him trouble himself. When the time comes for locking up the bolt will be shot, and he will fill his pipe and fill his glass, and say to his wife that he is afraid there is some truth in the story that Mr. Gubbins was telling him about Miss Cornflower and the Congregational minister. That is the sort of interest he will take in my not turning up."

She frowned, and put down her knife and fork, and seemed as if she did not mean to go on eating. Hardy poured out a glass of frothing ale. It was a fine sparkling ale, better than champagne, and looked an elegant drink, fit for red lips in the thin glass it brimmed with foam. She took it and drank.

"It is hard for any girl to be in want," said Hardy; "but there is no distress to equal that of the lady who is in poverty. What, in God's name, can she do? She is not wanted in the kitchen, and if I were she I would rather sell matches than be a governess."

"It is the well-to-do lady who makes it hard for the poor lady," exclaimed the girl. "Two years ago I got a situation as nurse to attend an aged sick woman — she was eighty. She lived with a lady. You would think this person would have known how to treat the daughter of an officer in the navy, who was too poor to maintain her as a lady. Mr. Hardy, she used to call me Armstrong, as though I was her housemaid. I had my meals separate. When they went away for a change I was not good enough to sit in the carriage; they made me sit on the box, and the coachman, in the genial manner of

the mews, asked me if I was the new maid, and if my name was Jemima. When we arrived the lady told me I must not sit with them if company came, as my presence might be objected to. I went to my bedroom, and kept in it till I was called out, and then returned to it."

"It is time you cleared out," said Hardy. "The soft hearts seem to be found at sea nowadays; at all events, they are not so scarce there as fresh eggs," said he, helping himself. "Your intentions are to get abroad and seek a berth abroad. I should like to read the map of them. You have saved seven pounds odd, and you arrive in London at night, and you don't know where to go. Next day you ask your way — where? To the docks; but what docks? London, Millwall, East India, West India, and so on. You enter a forest without a compass. Now what are you going to do?"

"I meant to go on board ship after ship," she answered, with spirit, "and ask anybody I saw if there was a berth for me on board."

"Did you ever see a large full-rigged ship in all your life?" he inquired, smiling.

"Never," she replied, emphatically.

"Go to the docks, and you'll see hundreds, and there won't be one that wants you."

"What is the name of your ship?" she asked.

"The *York*."

"Where is she going to?"

"She is bound to Australia."

"Is there no place for me in that ship?" she said. She looked at him piteously, though her natural grace of coquetry broke through all the same, with the planting of her hands upon her hips, and the way she side-dropped her head at him.

"We carry no stewardess, no females, no passengers," he answered. "The captain is a stranger to me. No, my ship is of no use to you," he continued, after a pause. "You must call with me upon some shipping people. There may be a vacancy for a stewardess. But suppose the ship is sailing for India?"

She gazed at him a little vacantly.

"We shall find some means of getting abroad," he went on, running a note of cheerfulness into his voice, for he thought by the look in the girl's eyes that she was beginning to bend on signals of distress, which would be hoisted in a pearly downpour presently. "At all events, you can't be worse off than you are, and somebody says that when you are at the bottom of the wheel the next revolution must hoist you."

They talked in this strain until they had supped, then Hardy, not seeing a bell, opened the door and shouted to Miss Bax to clear away. When the door was opened they could hear voices in the back room beyond, and a gush of Cavendish tobacco smoke came in. Some friends of Bax had called in a casual way by the back entrance, across the fields, which meant several drinks, clouds of tobacco, and all the gossip of the social sphere which Bax and his friends adorned. When Miss Bax had cleared the table she placed a bottle of whisky upon it at the request of Hardy, also cold water and glasses. She then said there was no hurry to go to bed. Father did not go to bed until eleven, and she left them with a smile as though they were a young married couple spending their honeymoon in Bax's farm, instead of one of them being an honest,

generous-hearted young sailor intent on doing his dead best to rescue a young English lady from bitter privation, and perhaps from miserable disgrace; and the other of them being a broken-hearted girl hurrying from a home of tyranny and drink, a home of one base nature, and of one spiritless one (which is likewise a baseness), with a future as dark as the night that lay outside, in whose funeral tapestries her imagination alone could have beheld the stirrings of the life that was to give her content and liberty, in whose impenetrable depths she found no more than a minute gleam of light from Hardy's strange and chanceful encounter with her while she lay in a swoon deep as death.

With her consent the sailor lighted a pipe. The girl sat in a chair opposite to him, her head a little on one side, hands on her hips, all in the old, fascinating, coquettish, incommunicable way. Outside the night lay in a thin gloom, and they saw the stars shining above the trees. The hush of the sleeping land was in the air. You heard nothing but the silver tinkling of a natural fall of water that ran down the hillside, and fell purely in a stone bowl for men, horses, and dogs to drink.

"You are a plucky girl," said Hardy; "but I think you are attempting more than you understand. You talk, for instance, of going to the workhouse. You are the last girl in the world to go to the workhouse. Think of dying in a workhouse," he continued, whilst she watched him without smiling. "Creatures bend over your bed, and say, 'Isn't she gone yet?' That's the sympathy of the workhouse."

"I want to get out of England, abroad, and be independent," said Julia.

He looked at an old clock upon the mantelpiece. The hour was about eight. He asked her if she would have some whisky and water, and on her declining, he mixed a draught for himself, then went to the door and called to Bax, leaving the girl to wonder what he meant to do. The farmer arrived.

"Bax," said the sailor, "you have given us a capital supper."

"I'm much obliged to you, sir," answered Bax.

"This is an excellent whisky," continued Hardy, "and I drink your health" — here he sipped — "and the health of your worthy daughter" — here he sipped again — "in your very hospitable gift."

Bax grinned, and said, "We make no charge. You're my guests, and you're welcome."

"Bax," said Hardy, "haven't you a spring cart?"

"Yes," answered Bax.

"Got a horse?"

"Got a pretty little mare."

"Will you drive me over to Captain Armstrong's as soon as possible to fetch this young lady's luggage?"

Julia started in her chair, and said, "Don't trouble, Mr. Hardy. My father will send the box on to me when he gets my address in London."

"How d'ye know he will?" inquired Hardy.

"Ah!" murmured Bax.

"Suppose the stepmother declines to let the box go?" said Hardy. "Now you'll want all the clothes you've got and can get, Miss Armstrong, if you mean to colonise. Bax, bear a hand, my lad; clap your mare to the cart, and report when you're ready."

He spoke as if he was on the quarter-deck of

a ship and making the sailors jump for their lives, and Bax went out, saying, "I'll not be ten minutes."

"How good you are to me!" exclaimed Julia, gathering the side of her pocket-handkerchief unconsciously, and looking at him with eyes that seemed to tremble with emotion. "What should I have done had you not found me? I might have died under that hedge."

"Let me see," said Hardy; "how far off from here does your father live?"

She reflected and answered, "Quite six miles."

"Well, we shall be back with your box before ten. Don't sit up; you want all the rest you can get. To-morrow will be full of business."

"Oh!" cried Julia, "I hope there will be no trouble. Father may — He won't like you to know that I have run away. He may insist upon returning with you, or coming here."

"If he is at home he may, and we'll give him a lift with pleasure."

"I should refuse to meet him," cried the girl, standing up in a sudden passion of indignation. "He has seen me suffer and has looked on. If he comes here it is not for me, but for *that*," and she pointed to the bottle of whisky.

"You shall have your box of clothes, anyhow," said Hardy, smoking coolly and looking at the girl; and three minutes after he had said this Miss Bax came in, and reported that "father and the cart was at the gate."

"Don't let Miss Armstrong sit up," said Hardy. "Do those chaps back talk very loud?"

"When they arguefy," answered Miss Bax.

"They're wrangling over the age of the queen now."

"Well, when Miss Armstrong goes to bed silence them," said Hardy, "for I want the lady to sleep well. We shall meet at breakfast," said he, turning to Julia and taking her hand.

"I shall wait up for you. How could I sleep?" she replied.

He smiled, but answered nothing, filled and relighted his pipe, and walked out.

The drive was pleasant, down-hill. The road stretched before them like satin with the dust of it, and many spacious groups of trees lifted their motionless shapes against the sky-line of the tall land and the stars twinkling above it. Specks of light in houses reposed like glow worms in the deep shades of the valley and up the acclivities, but the river streamed in blackness, and the lamps of a small town past the railway station were lost behind the bend.

Hardy stared at his father's house as they drove past, always in darkness on this side, but he knew there would be lights in the windows which overlooked the grounds that sank toward the river.

The house Captain Armstrong lived in was two miles further on round the corner, and made one of about a dozen little villas and cottages, including a church and a public-house. It was a very small cottage, thatched; but its sun-bright windows, its handsome door and brass knocker — the taste, in short of the man who had built it in years gone by — made it very fit for the occupation of a gentleman. It was sunk deep in a broad piece of garden land, and the apple-trees, whose boughs were laden, scented the still night air refreshingly.

"Here we be," said Bax, drawing up, and the sailor sprang off the cart, and walked down the path to the door with the brass knocker.

He hammered briskly, and tugged at a metal knob which shivered a little bell into ecstasies of alarm. A small dog barked shrilly with terror and hate, and in a minute the door was opened by a servant, past whom the small dog fled, and tried to marry his teeth in Hardy's right boot. A kick rushed the little beast back into the passage, and Hardy said to the servant, "I have called for Miss Armstrong's trunk."

"Oh, indeed," she said, looking behind her.

"Yes, indeed," he exclaimed. "I'm in a hurry. I've six miles to go. Is Captain Armstrong in?"

"No," was the answer, and as the servant spoke a door on the right of the passage was thrown open, and the figure of a stout woman stood between Hardy and the flame of the oil-float which illuminated the passage at the extremity.

"Who is it? and what does he want?" said the stout figure, approaching by two or three paces.

"I am Mr. Hardy, son of your husband's doctor," was the reply, "and I have called for Miss Armstrong's trunk. It stands ready corded in her bedroom, and I am in a hurry."

"Where is Miss Armstrong going?" said the stout figure, who was indeed Mrs. Armstrong.

"To the ends of the earth to escape *you*," he answered. "Bax," he roared, "fling your reins over the gate-post, and come and lend me a hand to ship the box in your cart."

"The box shall not leave this house without Captain Armstrong's permission," said Mrs. Armstrong,

who, poor as the light was, you could see carried a great deal of colour in her face of a streaky or venous nature; her eyes were small, and gazed with rapid winks as though they snapped at you as you snap the hammer of a revolver; her bust was immense; her black hair was smoothed like streaks of paint down her cheeks and round her ears, and she wore a cap with something in it that nodded, giving more significance to her words than they needed.

"Where is Captain Armstrong?" said the sailor.

"Out," was the reply.

"He'll not care whether I take it or leave it." He could not bring himself to speak even civilly to her. "Whilst you fetch him we'll tranship it, and the captain can get in and argue the point whilst we drive away. Come along, Bax. Sally, show us the road to the young lady's bedroom."

"Maria," exclaimed Mrs. Armstrong, cold and bitter, "go and knock on Constable Rogers's door, and tell him to come here at once."

"Shall I fetch the master also?" said Maria, quivering in her figure in the hot anticipation of rushing out.

"No, the walk is too long. I want you back, and the constable."

The girl shot up the walk.

"Bax," said Hardy, "come along. We'll easily find the room."

Bax hung in the wind.

"What's the constable a-going to say?" he muttered. "Won't it be breaking in if we enters without the missis's leave?"

Hardy looked at him, and then stepped to the foot of the staircase.

"You dare not go up-stairs, sir!" said Mrs. Armstrong, in a voice that trembled.

Hardy mounted.

"The constable shall lock you up," shrieked the enraged woman.

"Coom down, coom down, Mr. Hardy," sang out Bax. "The constable'll make it right."

Hardy pulled out a box of wax matches and struck one. The landing was in darkness, and he wanted to see. He guessed the girl's bedroom by intuition, opened the door, and saw the trunk — a small one — seized the handle, and dragged it to the head of the staircase. It was lighter than a sea chest, and with a heave he settled it on his shoulder, and went creaking down-stairs.

"I defy you to take that box out of my house without my leave," yelled Mrs. Armstrong.

Hardy seemed cool, but his spirits were in a blaze. He regarded the sending for a constable as an atrocious act of insolence, and he walked past the woman, not in the smallest degree caring whether he plunged the corner of the box into her head or not. She took care, however, to give him a wide berth, and he passed through the house door, whilst the little dog barked furiously at a safe distance at the end of the passage.

"Give me a hand with this," said he to Bax. "This is no business of the constable. The box belongs to a young lady who wants it, and I intend that she shall have it."

"Mr. Hardy," answered Bax, "I'd rather not meddle with the box till the constable cooms; he'll be 'ere in a minute. He allus smokes his pipe by his fireside at this hour. If it should be the wrong box —"

"It's the right box," exclaimed Hardy, standing with the trunk on his shoulder.

"I'd rather wait for Rogers to make it all right," said Bax.

Hardy sent a sea blessing at his head, and without another word walked rapidly to the cart, threw the box in, took the reins off the gate, sprang on to the seat, and drove off.

"Stop, sir; stop, for God's sake!" shouted Bax, beginning to run. But he was too fat to run. He was blowing hard when he gained the road, and stood staring after his cart. Hardy whipped the mare into a gallop, and gained the farm in half the time that Bax would have taken to measure the ground. He drew up at the gate, secured the horse by the reins, and, shouldering the trunk, marched to the door, and was admitted by Miss Bax.

"Where's father?" was her first cry.

"I left him enjoying a yarn with Mrs. Armstrong," answered Hardy, thrusting with the trunk into the room, where Julia was still sitting just as he had left her. "There are your clothes, Miss Armstrong," said the sailor, lowering the box on to the floor.

"Father's come to no 'urt, I hope?" said Miss Bax, addressing Miss Armstrong.

Hardy related exactly the story of his repulse by the insolent stepmother, his bringing the box down-stairs alone, Bax's fear of the law, and so forth.

"And now," said he, "as you've not gone to bed, Miss Armstrong, I'll sit down and keep you company, and smoke one more pipe, and wait for the constable."

"Well, if father's all right," said Miss Bax, "he'll be here with the constable, and soon, I hope; but it's all up-hill, and his wind don't favour him. I've got help at the back, and will put the mare up," and thus speaking she passed out, and left the young couple alone.

"So she actually sent for a constable!" exclaimed Julia, whilst Hardy filled his pipe, and looked at the grog bottle on the table. "Could you imagine a more horrible woman?"

"Here are the goods anyhow," said Hardy, striking a match. "It's your box, of course — I mean, I've made no mistake, I hope."

"Certainly it is my box," she exclaimed, slightly flushing and poising her hands on her hips, and dropping her head at him in a posture that brightened his eyes with delight, "and all I possess in this wide world is in it."

"I would not like to be the constable if he touches it or is even insolent over it," said Hardy, stretching backwards his broad shoulders, with a glance at himself in the little fly-protected mirror. He then poured out some whisky and water, and sat down near Julia.

"She did not express any astonishment at my leaving home?" said the girl.

"The dog did most of the talk," he answered, "and made for my choicest corn," and he looked at his boot, which exhibited the indent of the beast's teeth. "How your father could have —"

"Was she drunk?" asked Julia.

"I dare say she was. Some people get drunk without showing it. Miss Armstrong, I am no longer surprised that you should run away."

She smiled, but with mingled sadness and bitterness, and said, "If my father comes in with Bax and the constable, I shall walk out, and I beg you to give me your protection, Mr. Hardy, and to save me from seeing him."

Hardy bowed, but made no answer. He was a man of careless thoughts and many heedless views in all sorts of directions, a sailor, in short, whose horizon was salt and limited, yet he could not help feeling shocked at the extravagance of fear and dislike which the half-pay captain had by bitter neglect and a Christless marriage excited in the breast of a girl who seemed a true-hearted, heroic young woman, beautiful of figure, and with a face of romantic interest.

"Can the constable do anything if he comes?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," answered the sailor, "he can walk out. In what law book is it written that a man may not possess his own? That is yours," said he, pointing to the trunk, "and if Constable Rogers touches it we'll have him before the magistrates, of whom, by the way, my father is one."

He looked at her very thoughtfully, and she looked at him till her gray eyes drooped to her lap. The Persian kitten had left the room, and she had nothing to toy with but her handkerchief. Now, by the expression of Hardy's face, you could have said that he fastened his eyes upon her, not out of feeling, nor out of the sense of being alone with her, nor of the enjoyment of the spectacle of her matchless figure, but because he was maturing thoughts concerning her well-being. He had certainly a most honest face, and you tasted the man-

liness of his nature in each utterance and in every smile.

"I want to talk to you," said he, "about our arrival in London. I must get you close to the docks. I'll put you in the way of making a few inquiries whilst I am busy on board my ship; meanwhile I shall be asking questions."

"Oh, Mr. Hardy, what should I have done had I not met you?" she cried, in an irrepressible outburst of gratitude, and again he saw tears in her eyes, for she had lived hard and had fared hard for some years now, and kindness easily broke her down, as one long divorced from home will melt on her return to the sound of the music that her mother loved and sang to her.

"Do you know London?" said the sailor.

"I was never in London," she answered.

"Have you ever seen a ship?"

"I came home in a ship from India," she replied, "but I was too young to remember the vessel."

"You will not like the East End of London," said Hardy. "I don't know why sailors should make the places they live in dirty, yet it is true that after leaving Whitechapel the closer you draw to the docks, the grimier life looks. Jack has spent his money, you see, and is going away tipsy and ragged, and what he leaves behind him is anything but sweet, and they serve him as though he were a Yahoo. Look at his lodging-house and his boarding-house, at the dens in which he revolves to the ghastly notes of a black fiddler, with objects fit only to be lectured upon, or for the show of a Barnum. Take his line of railway, the Blackwall

line; the farmers wouldn't send their swine to market in the carriages, and so the sailor travels in them."

"How long have you been at sea, Mr. Hardy?"

"I went to sea when I was fourteen years old, and I am now twenty-six."

"In twelve years you have become a mate?"

"Chief mate," he said.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "what would I give if you carried a stewardess, and your captain would consent to take me!"

"I wish it could be contrived," said he, in his plain, straight way, "but owners never ship people they don't want. Even if I had influence, an objection would be raised that you were the only woman on board."

"But I have read," she exclaimed, "that a captain takes his wife to sea, and she may be the only woman in the ship."

"Ay, but she's the captain's wife," he answered, with a smile, "and if she were a shipload of females she couldn't be more."

They then began to talk of London and the East End, of a convenient part to take a lodging in, how it was certain that she must obtain a berth somewhere or somehow before Hardy sailed; and whilst they conversed the door opened, and Bax entered, purple with exercise and beer.

"Well," said he, breathing comfortably, as though he had refreshed himself before entering with rest and ale, "that was a fine trick of yourn, Mr. Hardy."

"Never mind about that, Bax," exclaimed the young sailor, cutting him short in his peremptory quarter-deck way. "Where's the constable?"

"He bain't cooming," answered Bax. "He knows the difference between climbing up a hill and climbing into bed."

"Sit down, Bax, and take some whisky," said Hardy, both he and Julia laughing; and after waiting for the farmer to mingle some whisky and water and pull a chair, he said, "Tell us what passed, Bax."

"Well," began Bax, "it was just after you'd trotted out of sight, with me hallering, being afraid of the law I was, when oop cooms the maid 'long with Constable Rogers. 'Oh, Mr. Rogers,' sings out Mrs. Armstrong, who was standin' in her door, 'the doctor's son's been 'ere in Farmer Bax's cart, and busted into this house, and gone off with my stepdarter's troonk agin my commands.' 'Where's your stepdarter?' said the constable, not speaking overcivil — blamed if I thinks he likes the woman, and he didn't love her the better for routing of him out. 'I don't know,' answered Mrs. Armstrong. 'Yes, you do,' says I. 'She's opp stopping in my house along with the gent as fetched her luggage.' 'What do you want me to do?' says Rogers. 'Your duty,' answers Mrs. Armstrong, 'twixt a snap of her teeth that was like cocking a goon at him. 'What do constables usually do when they're called in to houses which have been busted into and goods taken, otherwise stolen, agin orders?' Here Bax laughed slowly, as though recollecting something in this passage of words which he could not communicate, but which, nevertheless, he could enjoy. 'But there was no busting in here that I can see,' says Rogers, looking at me; 'you knocked and rung, didn't you?' 'Why, yes, of course we did,' says I,

'and the gent spoke the lady as civil as though she had been a maid of hanner or the queen herself.' 'Oh, what a liar, what a beast you must be!' says Mrs. Armstrong, screaming like. 'He forces his way oop-stairs, Mr. Constable, and brings down the box on his shoulder, me standing at the foot of the steps, and telling him not to touch it.' 'Was he sent by the party as the box belongs to?' asks the constable. 'Certainly he was, Mr. Rogers,' says I. 'They're going away to-morrow by the early train, and she naturally wanted her box to take with her.' 'There's nothing for me 'ere to interfere with that I can see,' says Rogers, drawing himself up, and puttin' on the face of a judge delivering a vardick. 'The lady has a right to her own. Your door was knocked on civilly, and the gent she asked to bring it away did so, and there's northen for me to meddle with;' and with that, without saying good night, he turns his back, and walks into the road, me at his side, and she hallering arter him that he didn't do his duty, and she'd lodge a complaint agin him, and 'ave the place cleared of a stoopid old fool. 'She's like my cat when he begins to talk to Springett's cat over the wall,' says Mr. Rogers. 'I wish the young lady well out of it, I do. Good-night, Mr. Bax.' So I sets off 'ome, and that's just what all 'appened."

Julia, though she had laughed and often smiled, now sat looking subdued with grief and disgrace. It was horrible to the feelings of a lady to possess such a stepmother as the wretch who owned the little dog that bit, and horrible also to hear her represented and dramatised in the language of Bax in the presence of the man who, as God had willed it, seemed the only friend she possessed in this wide world.

Nevertheless, they continued talking until eleven o'clock, by which hour Bax had grown too maudlin for human companionship.

Julia went to bed, and Bax rolled through the door to the back premises to send his daughter to the young sailor. All that he requested was a rug, a blanket, and a pillow, and then when the house was locked up, and Miss Bax had bid him good-night, he turned down the lamp, snugged himself on the sofa, and lay listening to Miss Julia's restless pacing overhead. There was sleeplessness in her walk; but the delicate tramp of her tireless feet ceased at last. He thought of her in her loneliness, and pity moved his heart, and he vowed that he would see her in safety, buoyed by a full promise of independence in the future, before he left England.

The window stood open a little way, and all night-sounds were clear. The stream babbled in the road, and its voice was like the syllabling of the perfumes stealing darkling down into the valley. He heard the distant hooting of owls like the crying of idiot boys, one seeking the other, and the thin thunder of the distant railway was a night-sound, together with the shuddering of the dry autumn leaves upon the boughs as though the trees shivered to the chill of the passing moan of air. And then Hardy fell asleep.

CHAPTER III.

THE EAST INDIA DOCK ROAD

At about two o'clock on the following day a cab of the old type, with rattling windows, straw as though fresh from the tramp of swine, a wheezing cabman, encumbered with capes, shawls, and rugs, with nothing but a drunken nose glowing under the sallow brim of a rain-bronzed hat — this old cab, with a corded trunk hopping on top of it betwixt the iron fencing, drew up at a house in the East India Dock Road.

Mr. Hardy, the gentleman whom we left asleep on the sofa in Bax's farm, got out, leaving Miss Julia Armstrong sitting in a cab, and knocked on the door, which was opened in a few moments by a little woman in the clothes of a widow, clean and neat in person, with a wistful eye which softened her face into a look of kindness.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Hardy," she immediately said. "I got your letter, sir. Your room's quite ready."

"Well, I can't say I'm glad to see *you*, Mrs. Brierley, because you know what seeing you means to me. Did your husband love the stowing job, and the hauling out through the gates, with a crowd of drunken Dagos on the fok'sle, and the dockmaster

bursting blood-vessels in expostulations to the mud pilot?"

She seemed to smile, but her attention was elsewhere. She had caught sight of Julia in the cab, and was dodging Mr. Hardy, who stood right in the way, to get a better sight of her.

"I want a lodging for that young lady you are trying to see," said Hardy. "Now say at once that you have a very comfortable bedroom for her in this house."

"You don't tell me that you are married, sir?" exclaimed Mrs. Brierley, putting this question just as she might put her eye to a keyhole before answering.

"No, nor keeping company with her, as you people call it," he replied. "It is a romantic story, and you shall hear the whole of it, provided that you can accommodate her with a bedroom, otherwise — mum!"

"Mr. Hardy," said the widow, with some earnestness, "you've long used this house. You knew my poor husband. My struggle has been to keep it a thoroughly respectable home for them who patronise me, and you'll not take it amiss, sir, I'm sure, if I ask you, is she a lady you can recommend on your honour as a sailor man?"

"I swear, Mrs. Brierley," exclaimed Hardy, with great feeling, "that she is a pure, charming, heart-broken lady, the daughter of a naval officer, whose sword was once at the service of his country."

"Then, sir, I have a very comfortable bedroom," answered the widow. "How long will she be wanting it for?"

"She shall engage it by the week," he answered,

and walked to the door of the cab. "Tumble down, my lad, off that perch of yours," he shouted to the cabman, who seemed to have fallen asleep, "and carry that trunk into the house."

Both pavements were filled with people, walking the everlasting walk of the London streets. Numbers had the appearance of seamen, some of them lurched in liquor; there were numerous black and chocolate faces, here and there a turban; grimy women flitted past in old shawls and rakishly-perched bonnets; roistering young wenches flaunted past with feathers in their hats, with cheeks deeply coloured, with yellow brows adorned with jet-like love-locks; and chill as it was, children went by with naked feet, and the shuddering flesh of their backs showed through their rags, filthy-eyed, hatless, and all the glory they had trailed from their God had died out in the atmosphere of fog, which added bulk to the thunderous omnibus, and made the fleet hansom a shadow down the road.

"The landlady," said Hardy, putting his head into the cab, "has a comfortable bedroom at your disposal. We cannot do better. She is a thoroughly respectable woman, the widow of a master-mariner, who commanded brigs, and so on."

He opened the door, and Julia jumped out, and they went together into the narrow passage with the cabman and the trunk following them.

The landlady, curtseying her greeting to Julia, admitted them into her own private room, which was, in short, the front parlour. The cabman was paid, and went away looking at the shillings in the palm of his hand. In a very short time it was settled that Julia was to have the use of this parlour for

her meals, and there would be no extra charge. The only other lodgers in the house were a sea captain and his wife.

The parlour was worth a pause and a look round. No apartment was ever more nautically equipped. The very clock was a dial fitted into the mainsail of a brass ship; the candlesticks on the mantelpiece represented mermaids; the walls were embellished with pictures of ships and those carvings which sailors delight in: ships on a wind, half their ghastly white canvas showing against the board, and the water very sloppy and fearfully blue; there were models of ships, and an old galleon in ivory stood under glass on a table in the window. A boy's heart would have beat high in this room. It was full of curiosities; artful carvings by whalemen, out of the bone or teeth of the mammoth of the sea; queer findings along shore under the Southern Cross, weapons of cannibals, heathenish jars, earthen vessels which had been the sepulchres of the remains of broiled whites.

After a little talk Mrs. Brierley took Julia upstairs to her bedroom. Hardy, who had often before viewed the curiosities, wandered again round the room, but his mind was musing over other things, and soon he came to a stand at the window. The lookout was gloomy and grimy; opposite were a tobacconist, a house in which a stevedore lived, two lodging-houses, a pastry-cook, and a public-house. There was a great deal of mud in the road, the sky hung down sallow and dingy, and so close that the crooked black smoke, working out of a hundred shapes of chimney-pots, seemed to pierce it and vanish. A change indeed from the autumn glories

of the country which the couple were newly from, where the hillsides, still thick with the leaves of the summer, were gashed with the red fires of the coming ruining winter; where the clear pale blue sky sank with its faint splendour of sunshine to the sharp, dark, terrace-like heights, which in their red breaks and scars of autumn overlooked the valley and the sheltered houses, and the quiet breast of river floating under the arch of the reflected bridge.

A man, thought Hardy, accepts a large obligation when he undertakes to look after a girl. But what a beautiful figure she has, and her face appeals to me. I cannot meet her eyes without feeling that I am in love with her. Shall I be able to get her a berth before I sail? If I cannot, ought I to leave her alone in London with about seven pounds ten in her pocket?

His brow contracted, and he hissed a tune through his teeth whilst he pondered. That thoughtless devil, her father, he mused, never came near Bax's farm. What is it to him that his daughter has bolted from her brutal home, and gone away with a young fellow who, for all the beggar cares, may leave her behind him in London in shame and destitution? 'Tis rather a tight corner, though. And he would have gone on meditating but for being interrupted by the entrance of Julia, followed in a respectful way by the widow.

"It is a very nice bedroom," said Julia. "I shall be very comfortable whilst I am here."

"I suppose you have told Mrs. Brierley all about it," exclaimed Hardy, whilst Julia seated herself, posturing her head with her unconscious, inimitable grace, as she glanced round the sights of the

room, and resting her hands on her hips and crossing her feet, to the undoubted admiration of the widow, who had on her entrance admired her beautiful figure.

"Yes, sir, yes," said the widow; "and I'm truly sorry for the young lady, but don't doubt she'll find a berth, and do well where she's going."

"Miss Armstrong," said Hardy, "I'm not due at the docks until to-morrow, and then I shall put in for an afternoon off. This afternoon we shall spend without troubling ourselves about anything. We are human, and must eat, just as every night we must put ourselves away in a frame of iron or wooden pillars, covered with blankets and sheets, and sleep, or else we go mad and die. There is a decent eating-house not far from here; we will go there and dine. You'll have tea ready for us, Mrs. Brierley, by six; and if the evening hangs, which it will, we will look in at a music-hall and purchase a shilling's-worth of pure vulgarity, which to me, when perfectly unaffected, is more humourous and more artistically refined than much of the genteel comedy of the West End theatres."

Julia laughed, and looked at the widow, who said, "I don't visit the halls myself. They've got one good singer at Whitechapel, I hear. He comes in dressed as a coster, and brings a donkey with him which he sings about, and they say it's so affecting that even strong sailors cry."

"If he sang of the donkey's breakfast Jack would cry more," said Hardy, and saying he would return in a minute, went to his bedroom for a wash down and a brush up, leaving the widow explaining to Julia that the term *donkey's breakfast* signified the

bundle of straw which sailors who are reckless of their money ashore carry on board ship with them as a bed.

Whilst he was going up-stairs a man dressed in blue serge, smoking a curly meerschaum pipe, came out of a bedroom and passed into an apartment that had been converted into a sitting-room. They glanced at each other, and Hardy went up another flight to his bedroom. Here he stayed a few minutes. His carpet-bag had arrived before him, and in it were a change of apparel, two or three shirts, brush and comb, and the like. The rest of his duds were in his sea-chest, which had been sent to the docks. He smartened himself up and looked a manly young fellow. The light of the sea was in his eye, and the freshness of its breath was in his cheery expression, and the colour of his cheek was warm with the sun-glow.

"Are you ready?" said he to Julia; and they went out, attended to the door by the widow, who appeared to have taken a liking to Miss Armstrong; but no one with a woman's heart in her could have heard the girl's story without being moved.

Hardy paused on the doorstep to say to Mrs. Brierley, "Is the man in blue serge, who smokes a meerschaum, the captain who's lodging with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"What ship does he command?"

"The *Glamis Castle.*"

"I know her," exclaimed Hardy; "a fine Indiaman. What the deuce does a swell like him do in these lodgings? He should put up at a hotel."

"His home's at Penge," answered the widow,

"and two or three weeks before he sails he always comes and stops with me, and brings his wife. Aren't my lodgings good enough for the captain of an Indiaman?"

"They are good enough for the owner of an Indiaman. They are good enough for a German prince," said Hardy, in his pleasantest manner. "Should I bring this lady here if they were not of the highest?" And nodding to her he stepped on to the pavement, and Julia walked by his side.

He was free in his comments upon the nastiness of the East End of London, and by his abuse of the mud and the shops, and the quality of the passing folks, he implied an apology for introducing Miss Armstrong into such a neighbourhood.

"It's sweeter to me than Bodley," she said, referring to the place she came from. "What is the good of fine houses and broad streets and handsome carriages to a girl who has no money, who has but one friend, from whom she must be shortly separated for ever, perhaps, and whose most ambitious dream *dare* not go beyond finding a cabin as emigrant or stewardess aboard a ship, and the berth of a servant, or, which is worse, a nursery governess when she arrives?"

They walked for awhile in silence; but the silence was in their mouths, not in the street. One of the music-murdering organs of those days was playing at the street corner they were approaching. Huge wagons were grinding thunder into the solid earth. There was a fight over the way — two Italians were going for each other. A crowd of dirty women were dancing round them, encouraging them by the stim-

ulating plaudits of the stews. An optician, with a row of chronometers in his window, stood upon his doorstep howling, "Police!" They turned the corner, and the notes of the organ died away behind them, and after a little walking they arrived at an eating-house with big windows, and a sheet of paper stuck upon the glass with red wafers, telling what was to be eaten inside.

Hardy and Julia walked in. It was a long room with tables, separated one from another by brass rails and baize curtains, and nettings for receiving headgear. About a dozen people were in it — some of them neighbouring tradesmen, some of them obviously captains and mates. With a few of the men were women, who were evidently wives or sweethearts; in fact, the prices charged kept the place sweet.

Hardy and Miss Armstrong sat down side by side at an empty table. A waiter arrived, looking hard at the lady, and the sailor gave his orders. He guessed the girl was hungry; he knew that *he* was, and if he could not have spent a sovereign when ten shillings would have handsomely sufficed, he would have been no true salt. It is worth saying here that all the money our friend had was about two hundred pounds, and he had come to London with twenty sovereigns in his pocket, and a cheque-book. As he was an only child he would inherit his father's leavings; but what would they amount to? A country practitioner who dispensed his own physic, and was glad to get three-and-sixpence a visit! A country practitioner with thirteen hundred pounds in bad debts on his books, and a horse, gig, and boy to keep! Still, whatever the doctor left

would be George Hardy's, who did not value the prospect beyond the worth of the furniture, and had begun to save a little on his own account, with some light dream of amassing enough to enable him to purchase shares in a ship, which he would command.

He ordered a good dinner from the bill of fare, and asked the waiter if the champagne of the establishment was real wine or chemicals. The waiter named a good brand, and swore there was nothing in the market to equal it. It was nine shillings a bottle.

"I never drink champagne," said Julia.

"But I do," exclaimed Hardy. "Bear a hand, waiter. We've been fasting since eight this morning."

The waiter sidled away.

"Champagne is the best of all drinks for young ladies," said Hardy; "and it helps the spirits of chief mates who are bound away on long voyages. What shall we do when we've dined?"

"I should like to see the docks," said the girl.

"Not to-day," exclaimed Hardy, pursing his mouth into an expression of disgust. "Let us hug the land as long as we can; besides, it will be drawing on to four o'clock before we've dined, and the docks and the ships in it will be invisible."

As he spoke these words the man whom he had caught a sight of in his lodgings smoking a meerschaum pipe came into the dining-rooms with a lady, whom you at once guessed was his wife. They looked right and left, and took a table exactly opposite that occupied by Hardy and Miss Armstrong. The man who had been represented by Mrs. Brierley as the commander of an East India-

man, named the *Glamis Castle,* was short and square, with a strong, red beard, and shorn upper lip; his eyebrows were reddish and habitually knitted, as though from long years of steadfast staring into the eyes of the wind. His eyes were dark and sharp in their glances; his brow was square as his form, and delicately browned by the sun. The lady was a homely-looking woman, in a bonnet and velvet mantle. She began to pull off her gloves, and her companion, after bawling "Waiter," in a quarter-deck roar, gazed fixedly at Hardy, who gazed back.

All the time the man was giving his orders to the waiter, with occasional references to the lady, he kept his eyes bent on Hardy, who muttered to Julia, "I believe I know that man." The moment he had done with the waiter he rose, and stepped over to Hardy.

"Is your name George Hardy?" said he, with a slight glance at the girl.

"Yes," answered Hardy, "and now that I've got the bearings of you, I don't need to ask if your name is James Smedley."

They clasped hands.

"Let me introduce you," said Hardy, "to Miss Julia Armstrong, daughter of Commander Armstrong, late of the Royal Navy. Captain Smedley, of the *Glamis Castle,* Miss Armstrong."

"How did you know that?" asked Smedley, exchanging a bow with the girl, whose peculiar grace of form, whose charm of movement, whose face, romantic and pleading, with the gifts of nature and the passions of her heart, his swift eye was observing with pleasure and curiosity.

"I am stopping in the house you're lodging in,"

answered Hardy, "and Mrs. Brierley told me who you were. Are you going to dine here?"

"Yes."

"Is that your wife?"

"Yes."

"Bring her across, Smedley, and we'll make a dinner party."

Mrs. Smedley had been bobbing to catch a view of Miss Armstrong, and the bugles in her bonnet twinkled like fireflies as she swayed her head.

"Miss Armstrong's story," continued Hardy, "is so moving that Mrs. Smedley will be grieved to the depths of her kindly heart when she hears it."

Julia looked down, and Captain Smedley studied her for a few moments, then wheeled abruptly, and stepped over to his wife. After a brief confab they both came to Hardy's table, and Mrs. Smedley was introduced to Miss Armstrong and her companion.

"Do you sail with your husband?" asked Julia.

"No," answered Mrs. Smedley, who seemed struck by the girl. "The owners won't let the captains carry their wives with them."

"A ship," said Julia, "should never be so safe as when a captain's wife is on board, because of course *her* presence would make the commander doubly vigilant and anxious."

"Haw, haw!" laughed Smedley.

The fish which had been ordered was now placed upon the table, and on both sides they began to eat. The waiter uncorked the champagne, and Hardy told him to fill the glasses opposite. This was resisted by Mrs. Smedley, a homely woman, who declared that for her part she loved nothing better than bitter beer. Again her husband "Haw-haw'd," and said they

would see Hardy's champagne through, and then he would order another bottle. He believed it was not usual in polite society to drink champagne with fish; but it was all one to him. Champagne went down the same way, whether its messmate was fish or flesh.

"Are you leaving England?" inquired Mrs. Smedley, addressing Julia, at whom she continued to look hard, though not in the least rudely, as if she found a good deal in the girl that was infinitely beyond the range of her speculations.

"I am endeavouring to leave it," answered Julia, looking at her with her head a little on one side.

"May I tell them your story?" said Hardy, "for we shall want our friend's influence," he added, with a nod at his old shipmate.

"Oh, yes, tell them," exclaimed Julia, a little passionately; "it will account for my being in the East India Dock Road," and her face relaxed as she looked at Mrs. Smedley, who smiled upon her in a motherly way.

Hardy in his blunt, sailorly fashion began. He did not spare Captain Armstrong, neither did he spare Julia's stepmother. He warmed up, and put the girl's case in forcible terms. Asked what a young English lady was to do who was, to all intents and purposes, expelled from her father's roof by the brutality of a drunken stepmother, he related some of her experiences in nursing and in seeking independence in other ways, just as she had related them to him. He spoke of his finding her unconscious by the wayside, and how he was determined to take this poor, friendless young lady by the hand, and help her to the utmost stretch of his ability to find a home, a refuge across the seas.

"Don't cry, my dear," said Mrs. Smedley. "I have known more cases than yours. It is very hard — and to be motherless — but you cannot allow your heart to be broken by a bad woman; and I think you are acting wisely in resolving to go abroad."

Julia put her handkerchief into her lap, and closed her knife and fork. Hardy poured some champagne into her glass, and bade her drink.

"What's the lady's idea of going abroad?" said Captain Smedley, whose face exhibited no more signs of feeling than had it been a rump steak.

"She has no money, and wants to work her passage out as a stewardess," replied Hardy.

"And when she arrives?" said Captain Smedley.

"She is bound to find something to do," answered Hardy. "The colonies are yearning for young English ladies."

"Young English domestics, you mean," said Captain Smedley. "What is the good of ladies? What is the good of gentlemen in lands where labour, and labour only, is wanted?"

"Why would not you go out as an emigrant, Miss Armstrong?" said Mrs. Smedley. "Of course," she added, "I presume you have Australia in your mind?"

"I would go out as anything as long as I could get out," answered Julia.

"Take my advice and don't talk of emigration," said Captain Smedley. "You will be miserably fed and miserably berthed. You will have a matron and a surgeon over you, and the discipline will make you wish yourself overboard. Your associates will be mean and dirty wretches, who would have qualified for transportation could they have

made sure of the sentence. Your ship will be ill-found. They talk of the emigrants marrying on their arrival. Yes, but what is a young lady like you going to say to such suitors as offer? You wouldn't like to marry a convict? You wouldn't like to settle down with a hairdresser in a back street? Don't you go out in an emigrant ship, Miss Armstrong."

"It is all very fine talking about *don't*," said Hardy, "but what we want is *do*. Miss Armstrong wishes to leave England for good. She pockets her pride, and is willing to work. She has no money, and I must secure her a berth somehow before I sail, because I am not going to leave her alone in London, where she's friendless; and friendlessness in London where all is opulence and misery, like the front and the back of the moon — one shining, one ice-cold as death, and black — is heart-breaking, and for many, Smedley, the invitation of the dark waters of the Thames has been welcome."

"My God! you're just the same — always sky high," said Smedley; and he drank some champagne out of the bottle he had ordered. "When you were a midshipman under me you were talking like that, and you're talking it still."

"Surely a man can put his hand in the tar-bucket without blacking his whole body," said Hardy, looking at Mrs. Smedley, whose face was in sympathy with his speech. "When I'm ashore I talk like a gentleman. One can't be always cussing and swearing; and oh! says you" — and his fine, dark keen eyes showed there was laughter in him — "Give me Jack Muck, nothing short of Jack Muck. Hitch up, turn your quid, pull your greasy forelock, mind that

you're boozed. Oh, Lord! Smedley, ha'n't you had enough of it?"

"Miss Armstrong," said Smedley, rolling his eyes slowly from Hardy to the girl, "why do you want to go to Australia? Why don't you go to India?"

"India," muttered Hardy, "what's she going to do in India?"

"No, but I tell you what," said Smedley, with emphasis, "such a young lady as that may do before she gets out there."

Julia gazed at him inquiringly, and Mrs. Smedley turned her head to watch his face.

"Don't you know, Miss Armstrong," continued Smedley, "that there is no marriage market in the world to equal an East Indiaman?"

Julia flushed a little, but did not speak.

"She takes out young people," went on the commander of the *Glamis Castle*, "called Griffins. They are young men with a glass in their eye and susceptible hearts behind their waistcoats. They also take out planters, merchants, gentlemen going to join houses —"

"And ladies," interrupted Hardy. "Ladies in plenty."

"You know nothing about it," said Captain Smedley. "A few ladies, most of them married. Now," he continued, "such a young lady as Miss Armstrong, no matter what position she fills on board, stands a first-rate chance of finding a husband before her arrival in India. Your emigrant ship is not going to provide any chance of the sort."

"I do not think of marriage," said Julia, who after colouring had turned rather paler than usual,

but she spoke calmly and even with sweetness, as though grateful for the interest these strangers were taking in her.

"Oh," cried Captain Smedley, with warmth, "but you *must* think of marriage. It is a condition of every woman's life. It is thought of from about the age of twelve until it happens, and nothing else is thought of. All the milliners and dressmakers contribute to the dream. It is the one idea in the darlings' heads, and of course it is a wrong one."

"What will Miss Armstrong think of such stuff and nonsense?" said Mrs. Smedley.

"What's a girl to do when she gets to India if she isn't married?" asked Hardy.

"They want governesses and nursemaids, I dare say," replied the captain. "Let her call upon the missionary. I took out the Bishop of Calcutta last voyage. He's a dear old chap, and many a yarn we spun together. I'll venture to say that a letter of introduction to him from me will ensure this young lady a berth."

Hardy, putting his elbow on the table, rested his cheek in the palm of his hand, and looked at Miss Armstrong musingly. Nobody spoke until Hardy started, and turning to Smedley, said, "Can you give her a berth on board your ship?"

"I am thinking of it," was the answer.

Julia looked almost startled, and exclaimed to Hardy, "We should be going different ways."

Smedley and his wife exchanged glances.

"I must see you safe on board bound to somewhere," answered Hardy, softly. "I am bound to Melbourne; afterward to a New Zealand port. Your ship will be bound to Calcutta. These places *are different* ways, and India is the same thing."

She looked down upon the table in silence. The other three saw how it was with her, poor girl, and how impossible it was, and Hardy then felt *this* with a sort of yearning of the heart that was as bad as sorrow.

CHAPTER IV.

THE "GLAMIS CASTLE"

It was nearly half-past four when Hardy and the others rose from the dinner-table. Not that they had been eating all this time. They had prolonged their sitting over coffee and in talk, and there was no obligation to go so as to make way for others, because the hour was neither lunch nor dinner time, and scarce more than two or three tables were occupied.

Nothing had been settled when they stood up and the ladies began to put on their gloves. It was dark: the dining-rooms were lighted up, and in the street the fog, though not dense, was wet as rain; the lamplighters were running along the curbstones, and in a chemist's shop a little way down the green and red waters in the big glass vases dully glimmered like the side-lights of a ship, heading a straight course for the dining-rooms.

"This is just the sort of evening," said Smedley, "in which to visit a friend's grave at some churchyard hereabouts. On evenings of this sort drunken men fall into holes full of water near the docks. The spirit of the Isle of Dogs stalks abroad this evening; you can see him in the sky and taste him in the wind. What shall we do?"

"I told Mrs. Brierley to get some tea ready by six," said Hardy. "This is not an evening to walk about in, and now I vote, Miss Armstrong, that we do not go to a music-hall to-night. I am for lying snug in harbour; are you?"

"I did not care about the idea of the music-hall when you suggested it," she said.

"They are vulgar places, unfit for ladies, particularly in these parts," exclaimed Mrs. Smedley.

"The cleverest performances I've ever seen I've witnessed in music-halls," remarked the captain, "and I never want to hear better singing than I've heard at them. Sometimes a cad, who has no respect for his own sex, who has no respect for himself as a man, and not the faintest sense in the world of what is due to women, comes on in evening dress, a white shirt blazing with studs, and a tall hat, which he is perpetually shifting upon his head: and this fiend sings a song full of *double entendres*, and he sings in greasy notes with a lickerish eye; and, strangely enough, I have never yet seen any man rise from amongst the audience, climb over the orchestra, and kick the animal round and round the stage into the development of a fresh sort of music and another kind of words. Otherwise, if you want talent, go to the music-halls."

"Shall we go to our lodgings and spend the evening there?" said Mrs. Smedley.

"Yes, and drink tea with us," exclaimed Hardy; "and before bedtime, Smedley, we shall have settled the business of Miss Julia Armstrong."

Captain Smedley gave his arm to his wife, and Hardy gave his arm to Miss Armstrong, and out they went, walking briskly so as not to get damp,

and in a short time they arrived at Mrs. Brierley's lodging-house.

The widow had not expected them home so soon, but she speedily lighted the gas in the romantically equipped parlour, which she had placed at the disposal of Hardy and Julia. The ladies went to their rooms to remove their outdoor clothes, and presently they were all seated in the widow's parlour of curiosities.

"Where did old Brierley get all these things from?" said Captain Smedley, looking round him. "Did he reckon to start a museum before the notion of a lodging-house entered his head? Man and boy, I've followed the sea thirty years, and the only curiosity I've got in all that time was my wife."

"I feel the compliment," exclaimed Mrs. Smedley.

"A curiosity," continued the captain, "because she is all goodness, loyalty, and affection."

And he got up and kissed her, and sitting again continued his eulogy, which was a sign that he had dined well and felt comfortable. The ladies did not object to tobacco, and the two sailors filled their pipes, Smedley observing that he smoked so many cigars at sea that he didn't give a curse even for a prime Havana, though at the high cost of seven for sixpence, when he was ashore.

"Don't you think, Miss Armstrong," said he, "that I've put the case for the East Indies strongly enough to justify you in listening to my advice not to go out to the colonies as an emigrant?"

"I am sure," observed Mrs. Smedley, "you stand a better chance of marrying in your own sphere. There are plenty of officers in India in want of wives, and I need not say—" She interrupted

herself, but acted the compliment she intended by glancing significantly at the girl's charming figure, and letting her eye repose for a moment or two on her face and fine hair. "It will be quickly known that you are the daughter of a naval officer."

"I do not think of marriage," said Julia, clasping her hands.

"I like your idea, Smedley, of a letter to the Bishop of Calcutta," exclaimed Hardy. "But how is Miss Armstrong to get out? Could you find her a berth aboard of you or in one of your ships?"

"Well, it's like this with us," answered Smedley; "we have six ships, and every ship carries a stewardess. Three are away, and the others, I know, are provided with stewardesses. The practice is for a person who wants the position to call at the offices, and if her qualifications are all right her name is put down, and she awaits her chance. Miss Armstrong might have to wait a long time, and she doesn't want to do so."

Julia shook her head slowly, and Mrs. Smedley said:

"How can she wait, Jim? She has no money, and no friend when Mr. Hardy sails."

"Are you anything of a nurse?" inquired the captain.

"I have nursed old ladies, but not children," answered Julia. "But I have had some experience in the sick-room."

There was a pause. Smedley filled his pipe thoughtfully.

"Have *you* a stewardess?" asked Hardy.

"Yes," replied Smedley, "she has been in the ship four voyages."

"What's the pay?" asked Hardy.

"Four pounds a month."

"Does she sign the ship's articles?"

"All the same as if she were an A.B.," replied Smedley.

There was another pause, during which the captain lighted his pipe.

"I can promise nothing," said he, looking at his wife as though he was trying to gratify her instead of helping the girl; "but I'll see to-morrow if some berth as second or assistant stewardess can be contrived. I shall see Mrs. Lambert — that is the stewardess's name, and I don't doubt that I can get the office to recognise the need of assistance, as I understand we shall be a full ship with a good many children."

"You are a real friend," exclaimed Hardy. "It is more than I dared expect from you," and he turned to witness the effect of the kindly captain's words upon the girl; but her expression was as one who gazes at a cheerless prospect. Observing that Hardy watched her, she exclaimed, in a low voice, "I can but thank you, Captain Smedley," and she bowed her head, leaving it bowed.

There was not much more to be said upon the subject after this; indeed it was easily seen that the girl's heart was with Hardy, and as he was sailing for Australia she wanted to go there too, which perhaps was not idle in her, because it was impossible for her to realise that he could not marry her, even if he loved her, which she had no right to imagine, as he could not support her ashore, nor as a mate, nor even perhaps as a captain, take her to sea with him. But things are felt and understood

which may not be expressed, and a little before Mrs. Brierley and the maid came in with the tea-tray and the cakes it was arranged that Hardy should accompany Miss Armstrong on board the *Glamis Castle*, which lay not far from the *York*, when Captain Smedley hoped to be able to tell her that he had managed to find a berth for her aboard his ship.

"It will save a vast deal of anxiety and of time, and it will rescue you from the horrors of the emigrant ship," said Hardy to Julia, who smiled faintly and looked as though the least expression of sympathy would compel her into a passion of tears.

Mrs. Brierley spread a liberal tea upon the table, but not much appetite attended it. The subject of the assistant stewardess was dropped, and Mrs. Smedley listened with attention, and Julia with fictitious interest, to the conversation that was almost entirely carried on by Hardy and his friend. They had been shipmates, as we have heard — Hardy as midshipman, Smedley as third mate, both occupying the midshipmen's quarters in days when Blackwall Liners used to sail with twelve or fourteen reefers in buttons and badges, who had sole charge of the mizzen-mast, the poop or quarter-deck, the quarter-boats and the gig. John Company's flag was then flying, but they had not served in that employ. They afterward came together, Smedley as chief mate and Hardy as third, in a vessel called the *Asia*, a ship with long skysail poles, a stem nearly as up and down as a cutter's, black as night, half the length of her aft sparkling with round ports. They talked of this ship and of her wonderful passages;

how her captain would carry fore, main, and topgallant stu'nsails, and pass by ships which thought they were cracking on with a topgallantsail set over a single reefed topsail.

Sailors who have been shipmates love this sort of memories, and it is like watching the coil of the sea — one blue ridge dissolving in the base of another, with the laughter and the thunder of heaving and racing brine — to hear them.

Thus they passed the evening, with the help of a little whisky and plenty of tobacco, and Julia, sitting beside Mrs. Smedley, told her story over again, but fully, and Mrs. Smedley talked of her son, who was a young curate of whom she was very proud, not only because of his social importance, but because of his eloquence: she declared that he preached a better sermon, young as he was, than any minister of the gospel in the whole diocese, and the interest Julia took in this matter, though the poor girl was thinking all the time of Hardy and the East Indiaman, charmed Mrs. Smedley.

The East India docks are among the oldest on the Thames. They embody many chapters of the maritime history of this country. They are of extraordinary interest to any one who knows the story of the ocean, and of the might and majesty of England as the Queen of the Sea. Their soup-coloured waters have reflected many different forms and types of ships, from the emblazoned, glazed, and castellated stern of the East Indiaman to the long, black, yellow-funnelled, three-masted steamer whose straight stem shears through it from Gravesend to New York in less time than it took the Indiaman to beat down Channel. The produce of many lands

litters the quays and fills the sheds. The steam winch rattles, the giant arm of crane swings its tons, the stevedore shouts in the depths, and the mate yells at the hatchway. The tall masts rise into the air, lifting their topmost yards into the yellow obscurity up there; figures dangle on the foot ropes, or jockey the yard-arms. The house bunting of a score of firms makes a festival to the eye, and alongside is the barge, whose slender company do not pay the dues, and whose language is beyond the dreams of Houndsditch.

It was Wednesday afternoon, about three o'clock, and the docks were full of the animation of the coming and going, and the loading and the discharging ships. The air trembled with hoarse voices, with the passage of locomotives and wagons, with the rattle of steam machinery, with the hissing of escaping vapour. It was the Isle of Dogs, and the afternoon was somewhat foggy. In one basin lay a number of fine ships, nearly all sailing ships, for there were very few funnels to be seen in those days, and along the edge of the wall of this basin two people were walking — Hardy and Julia Armstrong. They were two of a great many other persons, who were labourers, sailors, and so forth; and as they walked slowly, for the road was obstructed by goods and machinery as well as by toilers, lumpers, and loafers, Hardy, pointing to a ship lying on the other side of the basin, exclaimed:

"That's the *York*."

Julia stopped to look at her. She was not in trim to be seen to advantage; her sails were not bent, her running gear was not rove, but all saving her royal yards were aloft, and her model, though light and

showing the green sheathing, was visible in such perfection of run, in such elegance of elliptic stern, in such swelling beauty and fining grace of schooner cut-water and flaring bow, as could be matched only by those lovely creations of the ship-builders' art, the Aberdeen clippers.

"She is a beautiful vessel," exclaimed Julia. "I wish you commanded her."

"So do I," answered Hardy, running a critical eye over the ship.

"Do you like the captain?"

"I know his name," answered Hardy, "but I've not yet met him. He replaced a gray-haired man who was a philanthropist, and held notions and opinions which are not appreciated by ship-owners. He was kind to his men, and owners cannot die worth millions if kindness to crews is tolerated. A sailor to his mind was a man and not a dog, which astonished the ship-owners, whose views are otherwise. If the food was bad he went on broaching till he came to something sweet, and this was an enormity. He would go into the fok'sle and attend upon a sick man, and help him so far as kindness and the medicine-chest could. His crew would have gone on sailing round the world with him for ever. Such men are not fit to command merchant sailors," he added, sarcastically, "and so he is discharged, and probably will not find another ship, and God knows what he will do, for at his age what *can* he do?"

They continued their walk until they arrived at the corner of the dock. A large full-rigged ship lay there. Her house flag was cream-white with a black cross in it; a delicate space of bunting that trembled under the golden ball of truck, for this vessel had

short royal-mastheads, and when the yards were hoisted they sat like a frigate's under the eyes of the rigging.

Hardy caused Julia to stop, whilst they yet commanded a view of the ship's stern and the whole length of the decks from the poop to the topgallant forecastle. She was undoubtedly a very beautiful ship, probably the handsomest at that time of them all in the London Docks. Her stern's embellishment would have done justice to the imagination of the Dutch shipwrights of the seventeenth century. Dull as the day was, this *Glamis Castle*, without sunlight to reflect, without the sparkle of water to kindle stars and to flash prisms, was lustrous as though self-luminous with window and gilt and gorgeous quarter-galleries, and upon the sloping ebony of her counter, before it glowed into the yellow metal of her brand-new sheathing, were the long white letters of her name and her port, and these letters you could read in the water that floated stagnant about her rudder and run. Her main-deck and waist were full of business; her quarter-deck winch rattled its pawls with the noise of a hearse trotted by tipsy men from the graveyard gate; the crane was sinking costly burdens into the wide, black yawn of the main-hatch; riggers were aloft; preparations for the long voyage round the Cape to Calcutta were being pushed forward, as the newspapers would say; but, saving the mate, with one foot upon the coaming of the main-hatch, watching the slow descent of cargo into the depths, and saving the figure of Captain Smedley, sitting on the fore-skylight of the poop with an end of cigar in his mouth, there was then no man upon that ship who would have a hand

in the navigation of her, from the wide breast of river flowing beyond, to that other distant breast of river revolting with black corpses and their ships' companies of plumed scavengers.

"There's Smedley!" exclaimed Hardy, and Julia looked at the captain sitting on the skylight. "If he ships you," he continued, "you will be sailing away in a noble craft," and he began to talk to himself: "What a hoist of maintopsail! How splendidly stayed her spars are! She'll show cloths enough to get knots from the waft of a sea-mew's wing!"

They walked on till they came abreast of Smedley, and then Hardy hailed him.

"Come aboard, I'm waiting for you," sang out Smedley, with a flourish of his fingers at the peak of his cap. Hardy took the girl's hand, and they crossed a short platform of planks stretched between the edge of the wall and the ship's bulwarks, and descending two or three steps gained the main-deck, whence they made their way to the poop by the port ladder. Before they ascended this ladder Hardy stopped Julia to look at and admire the cuddy front. It was a true Dutch picture of its kind. It resembled the front of a house with its door and three brass-protected, red-curtained windows of a side, and a projecting wing of cabin on either hand, so that the front was a pleasant recess with its roof of poop-deck over it. But the romance of this fancy of cuddy front — perished for ever to this and all future generations — lay in the carving that lavishly embellished it: a fantastic mixture of anchors and flags with masts in full sail peering between, and human figures with wings blowing horns.

There was uniformity in all this variety, and the complicate picture in the dark colours of teak was fraught with meaning to the interpreting eye.

The sailor and the girl went on to the poop, a fine stretch of plank, but not quite so white as it would be presently, when it had been tickled by the holystone, and when the ivory spaces of it would take the sun-shed impression of the rigging like rulings in indigo, clear of the velvet-violet shadow of the awning.

"Well, here we are," exclaimed Captain Smedley, rising from the skylight and speaking with that bluntness which many admired in his speech, thinking it sailorly, just as people will inhale doubtful odours from an inner harbour and relish them as "ozone." "What do you think of the ship, Hardy?"

But though he spoke to Hardy, he kept his eye on Miss Armstrong, and was undoubtedly admiring her, particularly her figure, and the fascinating cock of her head with its tilted hat.

"She's the finest ship I ever saw," answered Hardy, with real enthusiasm. "What a marvellous stern! what a delightful cuddy front!"

"Meant to astonish the natives," said Smedley. "They have settled the choice of more than one coloured nob, and left the other passenger ships nowhere."

"Well, and what news, Smedley?" said Hardy.

"Oh, I think it may be managed," answered Captain Smedley, sending his fragment of cigar overboard with a jerk of his arm. "My wife is below: let's go down to her."

They descended into what was then called the

cuddy by way of the companion steps, and this interior was worthy its wonderful front. Narrow slips of looking-glass upon the walls of it, and between each slip was a picture representing some Indian scene. The effect was brilliant and novel; determination to delight the Oriental eye was visible in the grotesque figuration of the three lamps hanging over the table. A Japanese artist, delirious with opium, might have imagined the extraordinary shapes which supported the globes. All was luxury and originality. Aft on either hand and athwartships were cabins, but the main accommodation was to be sought in the steerage, which was gained by a wide staircase, conducting through a hatchway in the fore end of the cuddy.

Whilst Julia and Hardy were gazing about them Mrs. Smedley came out of the starboard cabin under the wheel.

"I am trying to make my husband's cabin comfortable for him," said she, with her homely, motherly smile, after greetings had been exchanged. "I hope he will soon make his last voyage. Captain Franklin, a friend of ours, was seventeen years at sea in command, and in all that time he and his wife calculated that they had only spent one year and three months in each other's company. It is worse than being widowed."

"Much worse," said Captain Smedley, "because you can't get married again. The beggar's always coming home."

"Let us sit down," said Mrs. Smedley. "Miss Armstrong, come and sit beside me here. I am afraid we sha'n't be able to offer you any refreshments, but Jim when he came along said something about dining at the Brunswick Hotel."

"Captain Smedley's full of original ideas," exclaimed Hardy as they seated themselves at the table. "What a different scene, Mrs. Smedley, this interior will submit a few weeks hence," he continued. "I see the gallant captain yonder at the head there, a row of ladies and gentlemen ranged down the table from either hand of him. The table smokes with good cheer, elaborately served; through a window yonder you see an ayah cuddling a baby and swaying to the heave of the ship. How the sails swell to the heavens through that skylight!" and here he cast his eyes aloft, and then looking at Miss Julia, he said, "And where will you be?"

"Well, you may take it as good as settled," said Captain Smedley, "and let my wife get all the thanks," he added, not particularly referring to Julia in his speech.

"You are very good," said Hardy, glancing at Julia, who was certainly not smiling. "How shall we consider it as good as settled?"

"You've got to thank my wife, she's taken a great interest in the young lady," said Smedley.

Julia meeting Mrs. Smedley's eyes gave her a grave bow, full of the unconscious coquetry of her natural postures.

"It's settled in this way," continued Smedley. "I saw Mrs. Lambert this morning, and it is arranged that Miss Armstrong sails as her assistant. Old Perkins, one of the chiefs, who was at the office, said that he couldn't see the need; freights were low, and the ship was sailed without regard to expense." Here the captain winked at Hardy. "I told him the lady was a good nurse and accustomed to children,

and that the stewardess needed help. So, Miss Armstrong, you will sign on, and you will have me for a captain. Do you like the idea?"

"I thank you a thousand times for your kindness," answered Julia. "This is a beautiful ship, and I am sure you will see that I am not unhappy. But — but shall I find employment in Calcutta? Am I not almost sure of finding employment in Australia?" and she looked with a wistfulness that was almost love at Hardy.

"You certainly will find employment in Australia, and most certainly a husband," said Smedley, who took the girl's hesitation very good-humouredly. "But I fear your employment will be menial, and the washing-tub, and the cooking range don't suit the likes of you."

"It is very true," said Mrs. Smedley.

Hardy listened with his eyes fixed on the deck. His heart had noted the girl's wistful look, and it was beating a little fast in some confusion of thought to his interpretation of her eyes.

"A husband," continued Smedley, "will certainly be forthcoming, but like the range and the tub, he won't suit the likes of you, though stress of circumstances make you his wife. Now it's all tip-top gentility in India, with a real chance of a first-class sort, aboard my ship, this side of Calcutta."

"Oh! it's marriage you are always thinking of, Captain Smedley," cried Julia, clasping her hands, and looking at him in her fascinating way.

The captain glanced at his wife as if the conversation was growing personal.

"Pray remember this, Miss Armstrong," said Mrs. Smedley, "if you are on the ship's articles you

belong to the ship, and if you cannot obtain employment in the months during which the vessel will be lying in the Calcutta River, you can return in her, by which time Mr. Hardy may have arrived, and then you can try Australia."

"That's a new idea, and a splendid one," said Hardy.

Julia's face brightened. "*Will* you let me return in her, captain?" she asked.

"Certainly, if you don't run away, as is customary with many who sign the ship's articles," he answered. "But you don't go out to come back; a major-general may fall in love with you on your arrival, and then you'll be coming on board to ask for my blessing." He added with a little movement of impatience, "Is it settled?"

"Yes, and we thank you again and again," exclaimed Hardy.

"You'll sleep in the stewardess's cabin," said Captain Smedley. "Let's go below and have a look at it. By the way," he added, "I may as well say at once that your pay will be thirty shillings a month."

Miss Armstrong blushed, and bowed, and smiled.

"Not enough, when it's all taken up, for a new gown, Jim," said Mrs. Smedley. "Where's the cabin, lovey?"

They all went down the broad steps, conducting to what was then called the steerage, in which the first-class cabin passengers were berthed, though in these days the word steerage is wholly associated with third-class people and German Jews, who quarrel over packs of greasy cards. The ship had plenty of beam, and the steerage was spacious for a vessel

of her burden. The cabins ran well forward, and there was plenty of them. The central deck would be carpeted when the ship was ready for sea. Handsome bunks, washstands, chest of drawers, and other furniture, made every cabin resemble a snug little bedroom, and the port-holes were large, with plenty of room for the passage of the thrilling and soothing gush of blue breeze, when the flying-fish should be starting from the metalled fore-foot in flights of pearly light, and when the sun should hang in a roasting eye over the foretopgallant yard-arm. The stewardess's berth was small but cosy: two fore-and-aft bunks, the same conveniences as in the other cabins — and this was to be Julia's bedroom.

She lingered a little looking around her, and the others paused to humour her.

Then said Captain Smedley, "I am hungry. Let us go and get something to eat at the Brunswick Hotel."

CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN LAYARD

A LITTLE later than three weeks from the date on which our friends had dined together at the Brunswick Hotel, in the East India Docks, a fine, full-rigged ship was sailing slowly in rhythmic lifts and falls, as full of sweet grace as the cadence and movement of lovely music, through the dark blue evening waters of the Atlantic, about two hundred miles to the southward of the Chops, and the autumn glory of the fast westering sun clothed her.

She was the well-known clipper ship *York,* bound to Melbourne and to another port, and she had followed, after four days, another beautiful vessel which we have inspected — I mean the *Glamis Castle,* bound, as the *York* was bound, for the Cape parallels, where their liquid paths would diverge, one going away east for Cape Leeuwin, and the other shifting her helm for the Indian Ocean.

The *York* had made a noble passage down the Channel, driven by a black, salt, shrieking, easterly breeze that grew into half a gale, with soft, dark clouds smouldering as they flew. The Channel sea had the look of flint, and to each foaming *scend* the ship drove in a curtsey of fury, as though to the thrust of some mighty hand. She stormed along

under two topgallantsails and single reefs and swelling fore-course, and a swinging wing or two of jib and staysail until she was out of soundings in a passage that had the swiftness of steam, as steam then was; and then the strong breeze fined down, the wind shifted into the northwest, and behold this clipper of spacious pinions breaking the dark blue heave at her bows into scintillant lines like the meteor's thread of light, with every curve of cloth at the leaches, from head-earing to clew, of a faint pink with the light in the west.

The officer of the watch stood on the weather-side of the quarter-deck with his eyes fixed upon a distant sail, close hauled and reaching westwards; but it was evident by the expression of his eyes that his attention was not with *her*. A single figure at the wheel grasped the spokes with an occasional movement, and sometimes a glance at the card of the compass, and sometimes a look at the canvas aloft, which, swelling out and sinking in, breathed like the breasts of human beings. The flush deck ran with a fair, white sweep into the " eyes," and you guessed by the neatness everywhere visible that the vessel owned a smart chief mate.

The anchors had been stowed. It was the first dog-watch, and a few of the crew were idling on the forecastle. Presently up through the companion-way, whose steps led into the cabin where the captain and the two mates lived, rose a little boy of about eight years of age, dressed as a navy sailor, and his bright gold curls shone to the setting sun past the round cap which was perched on the back of his head. He was a beautiful little boy of the purest English type; no arch Irish eye was ever of a darker

blue than his. A drum — not a child's toy, but a real drum, though a small one — was slung by a lanyard round his neck, and he clutched the two sticks, whilst he looked at the officer of the watch with a smile of his red lips, disclosing a row of little milk-white teeth, and said:

"Mr. Hardy, may I play my drum?"

"Why, yes, Johnny, of course you may," answered Hardy, "and if you'll beat a smart tattoo the breeze will freshen, for we are wanting legs, Johnny."

"May I go on the forecastle and beat it?" said Johnny. "The man who has the whistle will play it whilst I beat."

"Hurrah for 'The Girl I Left Behind Me,'" said Hardy. "Go forward, little sonny, and beat the music out of the sails, and mind how you go."

Just when the little boy was about to run along the decks an immense, magnificent Newfoundland dog sprang through the companion-hatch as though it had missed the little fellow below. The dog instantly saw the boy, and they sped forward together, the beautiful animal often bounding to the height of the boy's head in its delight in his company. The men on the forecastle all looked at them as they came, and those who walked stood still to watch them coming. The instant the dog was forward it swept its sagacious, beaming eyes, fuller of intelligence than many which look out of human faces, round the ocean line, and when it saw the sail to windward it set up a deep baying bark, a very organ note, grand in tone as the solemn stroke of a great bell, which, translated, as clearly signified, "Sail ho!" as the setting of the sun denotes the coming of night.

"Where away, Sailor?" shouted Hardy from the quarter-deck, and the seamen laughed out, whilst the dog, after one glance aft, pointed his noble head in the direction of the ship, and lifting up his nose to heaven barked deeply twice, which was his English for *starboard*. The seamen laughed loudly again.

Johnny beat a roll on the drum, and the sailors gathered round him, and others came springing up through the forescuttle, which is the name of the little hatch through which you drop into the forecastle or living room of the crew. The boy beat that drum marvellously well; he made it rattle as though a regiment marched behind him, and the sails on high rattled in echo as though several phantom drummers were stationed in various parts of the rigging.

The dog lay down and watched the boy, and a few of the seamen, one after another, went up to it and stroked its head.

"Where's the man that's got the whistle?" said Johnny, ceasing to beat.

"Where's Dicky Andrews?" shouted a man, and another, going to the scuttle, cried down, "Below there! tumble up, Dicky, and bring your whistle with you; you're wanted on deck."

In a few moments a young ordinary seaman rose through the hatch: he was slightly curved in the back without being humped, and carried the face of the hunchback, the corners of his mouth being puckered into a dry aspect of advanced years, such as may often be observed in people who are afflicted with spinal complaints. He was red-haired, and his little eyes were full of humour and as lively as laughter itself, and he wore the togs of the merchant

Jack — dungaree for breeches, an old striped shirt, a dirty flannel jacket, and a cap without a peak.

"All right, Master Johnny," said he, pulling a fife out of his pocket. "What shall it be, sir?"

"What shall it be, my lads?' asked Johnny, looking round with his sweet, delightful smile and arch-blue eyes at the weather-stained faces of the men, one of whom was a negro, another a Dane, brown as coffee, two others Dagos, with frizzled hair and silver hoops in their ears; and these this boy of eight had called "My lads."

"Give us 'The British Grenadiers,'" said a seaman.

"A dog before a soldier," exclaimed the voice of an Irishman. "Give us 'St. Patrick's Day in the Morning,' me dear."

"Hurrah for 'St. Patrick's Day'!" shouted several voices; and Dicky, putting his fife to his lips, started the most inspiriting air that ever mortal genius composed. The drum rattled, the sticks throbbed in the little fists; Dicky began to caper as he played; nearly all the ship's company were assembled on the forecastle, and many began to leap about and spring with delight to the music; the dog rose, and in a stately way ran or waltzed amongst the caper-cutters. That fore-deck then was a wonderfully animated picture. The arch of the fore-course, sleepily swelling and sinking, yielded a good sight of the scene to the quarter-deck. The setting sun painted it into a canvas almost gorgeous with the streaks of purple fire in the tarry shrouds and backstays, and in the climbing lines of the well-greased masts; and in the flush on the breasts of the sails, and in the red stars it kindled in all that mirrored it.

The fife and drum kept company superbly, and the fine Irish air seemed to thrill through the ship, and to echo up aloft like some new spring or spirit of life. The cocks in the coops abaft the galley chimed in with a constant defying crowing, about as melodious as the noise of a broken-winded barrel organ. The pigs under the long-boat grunted in sympathy with sounds which reminded them of the trough and the haystack and the near village.

Whilst all this harmless sailors' pleasure was going forward on the ship's forecastle the captain of the vessel came out of the cabin, and when he stepped upon the deck he stood a moment with his hand resting upon the companion-hood, looking forward, and listening to the music.

He was a man of about forty-five to fifty years of age, and his name was William Layard. He scarcely wore the appearance of a sailor. The lower portion of his face was hidden in hair, which was of a dark brown, streaked with gray, and his hair was long. His nose was a fine, well-bred aquiline, his brow square, his eyebrows shaggy, and his dark eyes burnt with brightness in the shadow cast by their eaves. He wore a soft black hat, which sat securely upon his head, and was clothed in a monkey-jacket and blue cloth trousers. No discerning eye but would have dwelt a little upon him in speculation. His face showed marks of breeding, but there was something else in him, too, that would have detained the gaze — a faint, an almost elusive, expression of triumph, of an inward exaltation, which was almost dissembled, and subtly revealed in the mouth that so delicately diffused it that only a keen eye would have witnessed it.

Hardy was making the voyage with him for the first time, and though they had been together for some days, whilst they had frequently conversed in the docks, he did not understand him, he had not got in any way near to him. But, as a gentleman himself, he felt the presence of the gentleman in Captain Layard, and had picked up from his own lips that he had been educated at one of the great public schools, had begun the sea life in the Royal Navy as midshipman, but, for some reason, left unexplained, had quitted the white for the red flag, and had been in command five years, after serving, of course, as second and third mate, always trading to the Australian and New Zealand ports in ships like the *York*, which did not carry passengers. Hardy had also gathered that he was a widower, who had married a woman of good birth, the Honourable Miss ——, no need to name her, by whom he had the little boy Johnny, who was the darling of his heart, and who had regularly gone with him to sea, since his wife's death, in the last four voyages to the Pacific. Our friend Hardy had also made another discovery: that the captain, even before the start, showed a disposition to treat him as a companion rather than as a mate. This was so unusual in sea captains — it is still unusual — that Hardy's speculations as to Captain Layard's character were considerably sharpened by it.

The drum and fife ceased on a sudden. The sailors stood about, hot and amused, and the dog with its tongue out looked eagerly from one face to another. The ship was still: there was no slopping fall of water alongside to disturb the calm respirations of the canvas; the captain, with his hand upon

the companion-hood, continued to gaze forward, and Hardy, standing at the mizzen-rigging, watched him askant. Then, through the serenity of the breathing, sun-flushed air, all the way from forward, nearly the whole length of the ship, came the clear high note of little Johnny's voice:

"Dicky, play 'Sally come up,'" and Dicky, rendered zealous by the captain's presence on deck, instantly put his fife to his lips. The drum rattled, the sails reëchoed the jolly air, the feet of the men began to shake, the dog raced and waltzed in stately measures as before, the whole forecastle was again in motion, and the ship, with her taut rigging vibrant with the shrilling of the fife and the roll of the drum, floated onwards over the long, languid undulations of the deep, which were scarlet westwards with the splendour of the dying day that was crumbling toward the sea line in masses of burning light.

Captain Layard stepped across the deck to Mr. Hardy.

"That boy plays the drum with a professional hand," said he. "He got the art himself, for nobody taught him. It is a good drum — good enough for soldiers to march to."

"I never heard better drumming, sir," answered Hardy.

"Where did Sailor learn to waltz?" said the captain, and he watched the dog. "How quickly Johnny has made friends with the crew."

"Any crew of Englishmen would cherish and pet him, and perish for such a beautiful, manly little fellow," exclaimed Hardy, with enthusiasm and admiration in his voice.

"He's always kept my crews contented," said

Captain Layard, smiling. "Several men have sailed with me every voyage ever since I took Johnny to sea, learning that he was coming again."

He looked at the sail to windward that leaned like a black feather in the crimson air, then glanced over the ship's side to judge her pace, and stood for some time near Hardy listening to the music and watching the men dancing. He said, with an abruptness that again surprised Hardy as it had before even startled him during the run down Channel:

"Have you ever studied the nervous system?"

"No, sir," answered Hardy.

"A man is formed of two sides," continued the captain, "and each side has a nervous system of its own. They are independent, and strange things happen in consequence. I remember when I was chief mate of a ship called the *Tartar* that I stood aft close to the man at the wheel, who exclaimed on a sudden, 'I don't know what's wrong with me, but there's two meanings a-going on in my head.' 'What's that?' I asked. 'This here side,' said he, lifting his right hand from the spoke, and putting it to his forehead, 'is a-talking one sense, which ain't sense, because t'other side's talking in a different way,' and here he touched his left brow, 'and all's confusion,' and then he began to mutter to himself. I thought he was ill, and calling another man to the relief, sent him forward and followed with some brandy, which put his head to rights. I spoke of this matter to a doctor when I got ashore, and he explained the dual system of nerves, and told me that overworked brains would occasionally chatter inconsequentially in each lobe."

"How shall a man act when his brain comes to

a misunderstanding in that fashion?" asked Hardy, gazing with critical interest at the captain's refined but singular face.

"*I* take brandy," replied Captain Layard, sending a glance aloft, then at the distant sail, then at his little son, who continued to beat in accompaniment to "Sally come up," whilst the sailors sprang about in glowing glee, and the scarlet in the west deepened into a rusty red.

"Do you suffer from attacks of the kind, sir?" inquired Hardy.

"To tell you the truth," responded the captain, with a peculiar smile, keeping his gaze fastened on the forecastle, "I had one just now. The left side grew importunate in nonsense; the right side was all right, and quite understood that things were wrong. The trouble was preceded by a curious beating of the heart in the ear. It sounded as though a wooden leg was hollowly tramping round the galleries of the brain—thump, thump, thump! It was like the noise of a wooden leg coming into a theatre when some actress of genius has stilled the house into breathlessness by her witchery."

"This man is mad," thought Hardy. "He would never converse with me in this fashion if his head wasn't in two."

The drum and fife ceased. Johnny, seeing his father, came running aft, and the Newfoundland trotted by his side. It was four bells, and the sun vanished as the metal chimes trembled away to sea; the breeze slightly freshened on a sudden, a sound of foam arose like the song of a full champagne glass held to the ear; delicate streaks of white flashed about the ocean breast in the twilight like some

milky wings of sea birds; the ship strained a little aloft and hardened her breasts, and stars of the east shone upon the dark brow of the soaring night.

The breeze blew with a little edge, but it was still the dog-watches, and the sailors, though abruptly deprived of the drum in which they delighted, started on another dance to Dicky's merry and excellent whistling.

"Father, Sailor likes dancing," said Johnny.

"All sailors like it," answered the captain, stooping to press his lips to the child's forehead. "Cut below now, my darling, you and the drum, and put it away and wait for me. I sha'n't be long, and then we'll go to supper."

The boy, with the obedience of a man-of-war's man, saluted Hardy with a flourish of his little fist to his golden curls, ran to the companionway, and vanished, and the noble Newfoundland vanished with him.

"There is no weather in the glass," said the captain. "If this breeze freshens we shall make up for lost time. You'll not spare her, Mr. Hardy."

"No, sir."

"Those are my orders to the second mate. I want to maintain the reputation of this ship; the freighters love her. I have no fancy for steam, but you can *time* it, and so tacks and sheets are bound to go; but I'll make a bold fight for old tradition," he cried in a curious tone of enthusiasm, "and what we can't carry we'll drag."

The second mate had come on deck at four bells, and was pacing to leeward in the deeper shade that dyed the atmosphere there when the freshening of the breeze heeled the ship. There was nothing par-

ticularly noticeable in this man, of whom a fair sight could be caught as he passed through the area of light diffused by the cabin lamp, which was burning in brilliance under the skylight. He was pale-faced and fat of cheek, very light eyes, lashes like white silk, yellow hair, and great ears which stood out in eager bearing as though they sought to catch everything which was said. He was dressed in blue serge and a cap, and this was his first voyage in the ship. So the captain and the two mates were sailing the *York* for the first time in their lives.

It was Hardy's watch below; he crossed to the second mate, gave him the course and so forth, and descended into the cabin. Little Johnny without his drum was sitting on a locker talking to Sailor, who was looking lovingly up into his face, and often the bright-haired little chap glanced at the cabin servant, who was preparing the table for supper. The *York* had been built to carry cargo; she was not a passenger ship, though at a pinch accommodation might have been found for three or four persons, friends of the owners, say, or people to whom the next ship sailing with immediate despatch might be a supreme need. In this age they would probably equip such a vessel with a deck-house for the master and mates. Her cabin was small and comfortable, very plain, with a seawardly look that suggested sturdiness, a very different cabin from the luxurious interior of the *Glamis Castle!* A few berths stood aft, and these were occupied by the master and mates, and one was a pantry.

Hardy stopped to speak to Johnny.

"You play your drum splendidly," said he. "But what's the good of a drum if you're going to be a *sailor, sonny?*"

"I'll play the drum when the bo'sun plays his whistle," answered Johnny, manfully. "And it will make the sailors quicker in running up aloft."

"So it will," answered Hardy, laughing heartily, for the image submitted by the boy's words tickled his fancy — a bo'sun piping "All hands!" down the forescuttle, and the captain at the break of the poop beating thunder out of a drum to hurry the men to the reef-tackles!

He lingered a little to talk to the boy, for it charmed him to look into the sweet handsome face with its arch eyes; 'twas as gladdening to his heart as the song of a bird or the scent of a nosegay, and somehow the child always put tender thoughts of Julia Armstrong into his head by the sheer charm of his smile. He caressed the Newfoundland whilst he talked to the little lad, and then went to his cabin to change his coat and brush his hair for supper, musing over much, but particularly over his last talk with the captain, who never before in the Channel or after had spoken so oddly or looked so strangely. "If the man *is* off his head," he thought, "my responsibilities will be enormous," for he perfectly understood the position that command confers upon the shipmaster; he was God Almighty aboard; mad or not mad, his orders must be obeyed; he could steer the ship to the devil and clap the mates in irons for interfering, and unless the crew mutinied — which few crews durst do, knowing how heavily the law presses upon seamen, even though they are able to justify their actions — they must go on obeying the master's commands, though the fires of hell should be visible right ahead past the horizon.

Thus Hardy mused whilst he changed his coat and brushed his hair, and he also thought of Julia Armstrong, and wondered how she was faring, and what progress her ship had made.

The *Glamis Castle* had hauled out of dock five days before the *York* sailed. She had slept upon the silent stream of the Thames one night, and early next morning was taken in tow by a tug, which released her off Dungeness; then with the stateliness of a frigate she broke into a sunshine of canvas, and, if the wind had prospered her, she should be some five hundred miles ahead of the *York*. But it was sail, not steam, and short of the report of a passing ship, no man could have safely conjectured her situation. But one trick of seamanship Smedley possessed: he never admitted the existence of a foul wind; he never sweated his yards fore and aft; he was no lover of the bowline, nor of the shivering leach. It was always "full and bye" with him, though he was points off, and thus he made a fair breeze of every head-wind, for his slants to leeward of his course gave him two feet of sailing to the one he would have got out of a taut, shuddering luff, and he never looked over the quarter for leeway.

At half-past six Hardy stepped out of his berth and found supper ready, and the captain sitting at the head of the table with little Johnny on his right. You will consider it early for supper, but at sea the last meal is always called supper, and after this they eat no more in the cabin. There was plenty, and it was good of its kind: ham, cold fowl, cold sausage, salt beef, biscuit, cheese, and salt butter. A decanter of rum glowed deep and rich within

reach of the captain's arm. A large globe lamp sparkled brightly overhead, and the scene was a sea-picture of hospitality and comfort, sweetened into a tender human character by the presence of the boy who sat on the right hand of his father. Sailor, the great dog, lay beside the captain on the deck. He was too dignified to beg; too well trained to expect. He knew his time would come, and lay patient in the nobility of his shape.

Hardy sat at the foot of the table. It was the custom in this ship for the captain and mate to eat together, and when the mate was done he relieved the deck till the second officer had finished. The captain gave the little boy a slice of cold chicken and a white biscuit, and filled his glass with water. The swing trays swayed softly as pendulums to the delicate heave of the evening waters, the bulkheads creaked, the rudder jarred as the swell rolled, and you could hear faintly the jump of the wheel chains to the sharp but swiftly arrested shear of the tiller.

The captain with his cap off disclosed a lofty but receding brow, rounding with something of the curve of the egg-shell at the temples, and his long hair and the growth about his cheeks and chin made him look more like a poet than a salted skipper. Hardy had taken notice that he stared at the man he talked to, which is contrary to the notion that the insane have a wandering eye. But that Captain Layard was not absolutely right in his mind the young sailor was convinced, as he sat at the foot of the table cutting himself a plate of beef and ham.

"Captain Pearson made poor passages on the whole, I've understood," said Captain Layard, referring to the commander he had replaced. "He

was a very cautious man, furled his royals every second dog-watch, and would snug his ship down to the first hint in the glass to save calling all hands."

"I was told he was loved by his crew, sir," answered Hardy. "And he seems to have been the most humane commander that ever sailed out of the port of London."

"Well, it is right that sailors should be treated as men," said Layard, staring at Hardy; "but most of them are fools, they are children, they don't or can't understand things." He put down his knife and fork, drew out a handkerchief and wiped the palms of his hands, then poured a wine-glass of rum into a tumbler, and filling the glass with water swallowed the ruddy draught.

"Some more biscuit, father," said the child.

An expression of tenderness, even like that which might spring from a mother's heart, softened the captain's singular and striking face as he looked at the boy whilst he gave him a biscuit. He stared again at Hardy.

"Sailors," said he, "don't see things from a right point of view. There was a seaman who wanted a Blackwall cap to wear at the wheel. To make it he cut up his go-ashore breeches, and to trim and bind the edges he cut up a new Dungaree jumper. The cap cost him a pound, but he believed he had got it for nothing because he had made it himself."

Whilst Hardy was laughing, for the captain told this story in a dry manner, and with a twinkle of eye that certainly did not hint at insanity, a voice was heard in the companionway:

"There's a heavy fog rolled down upon us, sir, and it's as thick as cheese to the ship's sides."

It was the voice of Mr. Candy, the second mate, and a moment after his step could be heard in the plank overhead as he walked to the bulwark rail.

The captain sprang up and went on deck; Hardy continued to eat his supper, and talked to the little boy. It was his watch below, and he was too old a shell to quit the meal until all hands should be summoned, which a quiet fog, however dense, topped by a reassuring barometer, was not very likely to occasion.

The fog, nevertheless, had rolled down quickly through the gloom of the early night on the gust of the black breeze, still nor'west. Black it was. Nothing was visible of the ship but a few spokes of light, like the arrested darting of meteoric fibres spiking from the glass on the skylight in a fiery arch. When the darkness of the night dyes the darkness of fog then the universal blackness is so deep that you might think the solid globe had vanished, and that you hung in the centre of space, death-dark and silent, moonless and starless, chaotic with dumb masses of the deep electric dye.

This night the fancy would have been easily inspired by the hush upon the sea, for the sails floated stirless; there was not wind enough to brush the salt curve into the expiring hiss of foam, and the invisible swell so lightly swayed the eclipsed fabric that only now and again did you catch the sad note of the sea, sobbing along the bends, and hiddenly passing away into the short wake in sighs and tones of weeping.

"Mr. Candy!" called the captain.

"Sir!" came the answer out of the soft invisibility in which the bulwarks abreast were buried.

They came together in the spokes of radiance about the skylight.

"Clew up all three royals and furl them. Let go all three topgallant halliards; the sails may hang. Haul up the mainsail; brail in the mizzen, and down flying and outer jibs, topmast and topgallant stay-sails, but leave the sails unfurled. See that your side-lights are burning brightly, and bend your sharpest ear over the water for a noise. Was anything in sight before this smother rolled down?"

"I saw nothing, sir. It was a bit thick before the fog came along, and then it came in a wall."

The captain went to the side to look over and mark the ship's pace, and the second mate began to sing out. One watch sufficed. There was little to do but let go with the drag of the downhauls; and the clews of the great mainsail rose to the slings to the sound of a few ocean yelps and a *"Chiliman"* chorus. The men were not to be seen until they ran up against you. They felt for the ropes, and their footfalls were like the pattering of dead leaves on a pavement to a sudden air of wind, strangely threading with the shore-going sound the squeak of the sheave, the rasp of rope, and the soft scraping of parrel descending the greased topgallant heights. The side-lights were reported as burning bravely.

The ship now had little more than steerage way, and the captain, after looking into the compass, and after repeating his instructions to the second mate to keep his best ear seawards and on either bow, said he would send the dog on deck, and returned to the cabin.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SHIP'S LOOKOUT

CAPTAIN LAYARD entered the cabin and called to the dog, which instantly sprang up.

"Sailor, go on deck and keep a lookout," said he, and in a breath the Newfoundland rushed up the companion-steps and vanished.

"He hasn't had his supper yet, father," exclaimed the little boy.

"I will send it forward to him," answered the captain, seating himself in the chair he had vacated, and helping himself to a piece of chicken.

Hardy had risen when Layard entered, but seeing the captain sit he resumed his place. His watch would come round at eight o'clock. There would be little time for sleep if he withdrew to his berth. He had supped well, had drunk a glass of grog, had enjoyed his chat with the little boy, whose charming face and sweet, ingenuous, yet manly prattle delighted him; he was comfortable, and the captain inspired no feeling of restraint nor sense of intrusion, so he sat on.

"The fog is as thick as mud in a wine-glass," exclaimed Captain Layard. "Some go fast and some go slow through these smothers. The fast man holds that a ship is under more immediate

control when travelling; I am a slow man when I can't see. In fact," he continued, with a look of exaltation, with a smile of profound self-complacency, "I claim to know my business. There is no man afloat who is going to teach me what to do when a thing is to be done, and done properly."

"If all ships would heave to," said Hardy, witnessing the captain's mind in the expression which subtly interpreted it, "then it would be the right thing in a fog to stop your engines, or back your topsail. But it's the other fellow you can't see that makes the fear." He immediately added, "Your dog is extraordinarily sagacious, sir."

"It amused me to train him," replied the captain, smoothing Johnny's little hand as it lay upon the table. "There is no fog-horn which equals the screams of an irritated sow. A sow once saved me from a collision by causing a dog, in an invisible ship close aboard on the starboard bow, to bark. That put the idea into my head. Sailor has the voice of a trombone, and he didn't need much training either; he is now perched between the knight-heads with more searching eyes and clearer ears than the whole ship's company could put together if they made their heads into one."

Hardy laughed.

"Don't forget Sailor's supper, father," said Johnny.

"I'll not forget," answered the captain.

As he spoke the words the man who waited on the cabin came down the steps.

"Is it still very thick?" asked the captain.

"Blinding, sir," was the answer.

"Get the dog's supper, and take it to him on the

fok'sle," said Captain Layard. "See that he has water; it may be an all-night job for him. Pearson was a very humane man," he went on, addressing Hardy. "I might guess that by the medicine-chest he's left me. I overhauled it before we sailed, and wondered at the quantity of sleeping and death stuffs it contained. I found out that in one of his passages home from Calcutta several men died of cholera, and he was at his wits' ends for drugs. Ships bound to India should always carry a surgeon; they would — they must, if there are passengers. But glauber salts are good things for Jack: 'tis an all-round physic, as good for smallpox as for indigestion." He laughed somewhat heartily, and continued, "Pearson's men might have died to a man, for his medicine-chest showed badly like the end of a long voyage. Fortunately half of them took it into their heads to live, and they got the ship home. After this Pearson never went to sea without plenty of drink for cholera. He's left some doctor's handbook on the diseases of sailors, and there's a volume on poisons full of pencil marks. His humanity was unwearying, but he got the sack all the same. Johnny, my darling, it's time for bed. Come along, my lamb."

He took the boy by the hand, and they went into the captain's cabin, the child crying as his father opened the door, "Good night, Mr. Hardy."

It was half-past seven; Hardy went into his berth to smoke a pipe before relieving the deck. The captain's cabin glowed with the soft illumination of an oil lamp screwed to a bulkhead, and swinging in its bracket to the heave. It was a fine large cabin, equipped with a table covered with green baize on which were writing materials, nautical instruments,

and such things; a fore-and-aft bunk for the captain, and a brass cot at the foot of the bunk, safely secured to the deck, for Johnny. It was comfortable with a carpet, chairs, a short sofa, a chest of drawers, and washstand. Close beside Johnny's cot on the deck was the boy's drum.

The captain began to undress the little fellow, who talked to him of Mr. Hardy; he said he wished Mr. Hardy could sleep with them. No mother ever used a tenderer hand in putting her child to bed than did this strange sea-captain, mad or not mad. His eyes were tender, twice he kissed the boy's fair brow; he seemed reluctant to make an end of this undressing, as though he loved to have his hands upon the child, to have his face close to him.

"Now your prayers, Johnny," said he. And the boy knelt by his cot, and in words he had learnt from his father, prayed that his mother would look down and watch over them both, and that God would bless his father and himself.

The captain stood by in devout posture, and whispered the words which the child uttered, then hoisted the little fellow into bed, covered him up, and kissed him.

"Mayn't Mr. Hardy come and see me in bed?" said the child.

"Ay," answered the captain, and he stepped to the door, and called the chief officer by name.

Hardy instantly came out, leaving his pipe behind him.

"Come and see my boy in bed," said the captain.

Hardy, not knowing that this was due to the child and not to the father, was secretly astonished, for though he had always lived on very good terms with

the captains he had sailed with, he had never met any commander who treated him just as though they occupied the same platform.

He followed him into his cabin, and the boy with his bright hair on the pillow smiled a greeting.

"It is a beautiful bed, Johnny," said the mate, stepping close to the cot, and looking at him with the affection which such a child as this will excite in a sailor's heart at sea, moved by thoughts of home and of the fair land he has left, of his own childhood perhaps, and visited by that mute sense of solitude, peril, and the holy and brooding presence of the Great Spirit, which is the impulse of the deep, and understood by those to whom the ocean, eternal and boundless in the constant recession of its horizon, is an interpretable face. He turned to the captain and exclaimed:

"If your boy ever dreams, sir, it is of the angels who guard his bed."

He kissed the little chap, and was going.

"A moment, Mr. Hardy," exclaimed the captain, who did not seem to have caught or noticed what the mate said. "This is an example of old Pearson's forethought and humanity."

He stepped, followed by Hardy, to a corner of the cabin, in which stood a small mahogany chest, and lifted the lid. This lid was furnished with scissors, syringes, and the like, and the contents of the chest consisted of a number of stoppered green bottles, as well as sticking-plaster, lint, and surgical instruments. The captain, pointing to the bottles as he spoke, said:

"This is laudanum; this is labelled morphia; this is atropine for the ulcerated eye; this is chlorodyne.

Here are drugs enough to start a man as a chemist. This is a book," said he, half lifting a thin volume from a pocket and letting it slip back, "that tells you how to make use of all this stuff; ay, even the right dose of Glauber's salt is given."

"I hope there's no chance of Master Johnny handling those bottles, sir?" said the mate, who, though he gazed with curiosity at this revelation of the open lid, was not inattentive to the expression of the commander's face, which was one of superiority, as though he had appropriated and was triumphing in the merits of the kind foresight which were certainly not his but Pearson's.

"You will never look into this chest, Johnny?" said Hardy.

"His mother was the very soul of honour," exclaimed Captain Layard, "and that child cannot but be the spirit of truth and honesty itself."

He shut the lid and added, "Where, I wonder, does the human soul come from? The father cannot give his, or a portion of his, to the child, nor can the mother, for that might involve the forfeiture of their title to immortality. The great poet must be right; the soul which informs a child, which spiritualises it in the womb and at its birth, must come from God, who is its Home. What a wonderful thought! What a revelation it has been to me! What an assurance and promise!"

He stood gazing steadfastly at Hardy, who, saying, a little uneasily, "These are matters quite beyond me, sir," again made for the door, through which he passed in silence, the captain standing motionless, his hands clasped before him, and his eyes seeming to see something beyond the bulkhead, upon which he had fastened them.

At eight o'clock Hardy's watch came round. He went on deck in a very thoughtful state, and the deep dye of that tremendous void of black vapour was very well qualified to darken his mood into the hue of the crow — a bird deemed portentous in ancient seafaring. He stood in the spokes of lamp-sheen about the skylight and called to Mr. Candy, who came upon him suddenly out of some part of the deck like a man walking through a glass in a dark room. He exchanged a few sentences with this second mate, but they wholly concerned the business of the ship. Candy was not a person to take into one's confidence; his silver-white lash shaded a pale eye that marked one of those souls which, as you cannot make up your mind about them, you resolve to distrust; otherwise Hardy, in defiance of all law of discipline, and even of sea-breeding, would, in the humour of anxiety that then possessed him, have been glad to hear Mr. Candy's opinion of the commander.

The second mate went below to bed after reporting that he had visited the forecastle, and found the Newfoundland awake and vigilant, also that two hands paced the forward-deck as lookouts.

The air of wind was still northwest; it breathed with just weight enough to steady the topsails and the foresail. As the ship leaned with the languid heave of the sea, the sails hanging from the yards on the caps, and the festooned clews of the invisible mainsail, flapped in strokes of the pinions of mammoth birds winging betwixt the masts. The lap of the brine against the bows, which were slowly breaking the hidden waters, saddened the blindness of the night with a note of supernatural pain and

grief. The ship was moving slowly, and, as before, nothing of her was distinguishable but the dim lustre smoking in hurrying streams and wreaths of vapour about the skylight and about the binnacle-stand.

It was damp, depressing, heart-subduing. The philosophy of the mariner, which is one of endurance, and of that species of submission which is attended with sea blessings and the profanities of the ocean-parlour, breaks down in the fog. Here is the helplessness, here is the sealed eye, the spiriting of groping anxiety, which is a sort of anguish. It is not his ship or himself that he fears; the emotions bred by fog are ahead or abeam, and it need not be steam, for a dirty little brig or schooner, with her half-dozen of a crew shouting their consternation under the foretopmast stay, has been known to smite and sink an ocean palace full of light, of superb machinery, of saloon tables glowing with fruit and plate, and populous with diners.

The deck was not to be comfortably measured in a quarter-deck walk, in blackness so dense that if you swerved by so much as two degrees of angle of foot you thumped your breast against the bulwarks. Hardy laid hold of the wet weather vang on the quarter and fell into reflection, for loneliness breeds thought, and no man is more lonely than the officer of the watch on board a merchantman. His mind went again to Julia Armstrong, but it had found an unsettling fascination in Captain Layard, and it quickly returned to him. He could not doubt that he was a little mad; his ideas were strange, yet his speculations showed thought and culture. He was insane to one to whom he talked freely, but to his crew, to whom he would not and did not talk, he

must be the commonplace "old man" of the quarter-deck, and in this way Hardy feared he might prove dangerous even to tragedy.

The ship's bell was hung in the wake of the galley, and a little clock, illuminated by a bull's-eye lamp, was hung up under a penthouse on a timber erection just before it. A lookout man would walk to the clock to see the time, and at ten he struck "four bells," at which hour it was as black and thick as ever after its first coming; the light breeze blew, and the ship swayed softly through the void.

Hardy made his way forward to see to the dog. He struck between two men who were walking the deck, and one muttered, "What cheer?"

"By God, my lads," said Hardy, "you'll not find out what a wolf's had for dinner by squinting down his throat!"

There was a faint haze about the forescuttle: it came up into the inky thickness from the forecastle lamp. It was a slight relief, and even a rest for the eye, but the shadow forward was deeper than it was aft, for up there in the void was the raven thunder-cloud of foresail and foretopsail, and further forward yet, like ebon waterspouts soaring from sea to topmast head, were the midnight dyes of the jib and staysail.

Hardy found the night-lights burning brightly, and going toward the heel of the bowsprit he touched the Newfoundland lookout with his foot. He patted the invisible, shaggy head, and passed his arm around its neck, and pressed the creature's long wet jaw to his breast, a token of love and encouragement which the dog acknowledged by a grunt or two of happiness.

"Keep a bright lookout, Sailor," said Hardy, patting the shaggy, invisible head again, and knowing there were two human lookouts somewhere about, he called, and they answered out of the black blankness to leeward. Well, he could not tell them to keep their eyes skinned, for the sight of man and even of dog lay dead upon that forecastle, but he directed them to listen with all their might, to go often to the head-rail and strain their ears, and they answered, "Ay, ay, sir."

Very plainly on this forecastle did you hear the sulky sob of the sea like something large and timid, gasping to the rude shock of the stem. The ocean hissed a little here and there, but the light wind could not give life enough to the glance of the curl of sea to strike through it to the eye, even though one looked straight down over the rail.

Hardy slowly made his way aft, and on approaching the binnacle discerned the captain standing in the faint sheen close to the helmsman.

"I never remember a thicker fog," said the captain, and he asked questions about the lookout, the dog, and the side-lights. Then walking out of the binnacle haze he struck the bulwarks almost abreast, and Hardy followed and stood alongside.

"Whenever I am in this sort of thing," said Captain Layard, "I think of the blind. It is terrible to wake of a bright morning to the eternal darkness of one's life. I should fear the presence of visions in that everlasting gloom. It would be haunted with phantoms, and as thick-set with wild, grotesque, horrible, brassy faces as the human eye when morphia closes the lid."

"My father is, as you know, sir, a doctor," said

Hardy, " and I've heard him speak of the blind. He declares they are less to be pitied than the stone deaf." The captain pshaw'd. " He would say," continued Hardy, " contrast the faces of the two afflictions. They both force the mind's eye more deeply inwards, but in the one there is the pain of attention ever strained and a baffled, helpless look, whilst the other is mild and restful as though it had found peace in its communes with God."

" Your father may be a very clever man," said Captain Layard, " but I have no faith in doctors. I have never met a doctor who did me any good, and I have been ill in my time, believe me. They let my wife die."

He paused as if in some passage of deep emotion. In this interval Hardy thought to himself what an extraordinary conversation for the quarter-deck of a ship, close upon midnight, in a dense fog!

Some hanging fold of canvas flapped aloft. In a voice as changed as though he was acting, the captain exclaimed:

" That's the speech of a sail that asks to be furled. The glass is high, and there's no foul weather anywhere. If the breeze freshens by ever so little, or if this light air draws ahead, call me, sir."

There was positive refreshment in this plain speech of the sea to Hardy, who on replying to the captain found that he had gone, and in the steaming faintness hovering in the companion just caught a sight of his head disappearing.

Eleven bells had been struck, and Hardy was beginning to think that it would be eight bells soon, which must signify shelter, freedom from the dwarfish drench of the vapour, as fine but as penetrating

as rain in Lilliput, a warm blanket, half a pipe, and then oblivion for an off-shore spell of nearly four hours, when on a sudden the dog barked. The tones were deep and constant, and to the first roll of those organ notes the loose wet canvas beat the masts aloft in a sudden heave of the whole fabric, and an element of alarm and even of fearful expectation entered the black void and thickened it, and seemed to close it round about till the smoking colour of light on fore-castle and quarter-deck dimmed into the preternatural faintness of the salt sea glow when it shudders a fathom deep under some smooth tropic surface.

The dog continued to bark, and there was an importunate vehemence in his notes, a bounding pulse of urgency as though the noble creature with instincts superior to man's knew that a matter of life or death was concerned in his sentinel bugling. Voices sounded forward, you heard a hurry of feet; again the ship leaned, and the sails smote the masts with an alarum sound of metal; and to the accompaniment of this midnight concert, made ghastly by blackness, by the overwhelming blindness of fog and by the presence of danger, Hardy rushed forward, taking his chance of what might be in the road.

"Jump for a port-fire, one of you," he shouted, sending his cry slap into a very web of seamen's growling voices, the owners of which were no more to be seen than the ship's keel. "What is it, Sailor?"

And now he was alongside the dog, and with his hand on its head felt in the direction of the creature's muzzle, and found that it was delivering its notes straight away over the head-rail, about two points on the weather bow.

"Wheel, there!" he roared. "Starboard your helm. Let her go off five points."

"Starboard it is, sir," came back the answer.

"See that sheen out to starboard there, sir?" rang out a voice which sounded clear through the barking of the dog.

"Hush! Sailor. Down, sir. Hush, my beauty," cried Hardy, and the dog was instantly silent. "Hark! now."

A sort of oozing of light, dimly scarlet, wild and weak and wet as some ghostly star of death hovering over a grave, was visible to windward, a trifle forward of the fore-rigging. "Hark!" cried Hardy, and sure enough amid the greasy slopping of water, falling lazily from the thrust of the ship's bow, they could hear a distant noise of shouting, of cries re-echoed as from one part of a deck to the other, with a deeper threading of some throat hoarse in a speaking-trumpet.

"Is the mate forward?" sang out the voice of the ship's carpenter.

"Fire one right away off," shouted Hardy, knowing what the fellow had got and meant.

In a few heart-beats a stream of sun-bright fire was pouring like water from a hose over the bow, but its lightning illumination touched but a narrow stretch of the dark water. The foresail turned of a sickly yellow, and the staysail soared wan as the wing of the albatross in dying moonlight. All above and abaft, and then forward to the flying-jib boom end, yards and sailcloth lay steeped in the impenetrable smother, and within the area of the light the fog drove slowly in a very Milky Way of silver crystals. But the men could see one another, and

helped by the light Hardy sped aft to be near the wheel, and there he found Captain Layard.

"There's a ship off the starboard bow, sir," he exclaimed.

"They'll never see that port fire," answered the commander. "They're burning flares, or we shouldn't see *her*. A foreigner, by the row. How's she heading?"

That question was answered even as he asked it by the revelation of a ship. It had the suddenness of a magic-lantern picture flung swiftly. They saw at the range of a pistol a lurid shape, which they easily distinguished as a barque with painted ports, a tall poop, and a tall topgallant forecastle. She was burning flares upon her main-deck and waist, and the red flames, winding tongues of fire into feathers of soot-black smoke, jewelled the whole apparition with red-hot stars. They pierced through the fog like sunlit rubies from glass and brass, from wet plank and mast, and the grease of spars. She was so close that she shone out clearly, and made light enough for the people of the *York* to see by. Her helm was hard up and she was slowly paying off, but her flying-jib boom must catch the mizzen-rigging of the Australian clipper. You heard the splintering of wood aloft, the crash of nearer timber, broken off carrot-like betwixt a lazy roll of both ships.

The barque's decks were a sight for the gods. Figures of men could be seen rushing frantically here and there. They were all shouting; men on the poop were screeching orders, and nothing but the helm gave heed; men on the forecastle were roaring and flourishing their fists. The flames duplicated

the shadows of the running figures; painted lines of the rigging upon the planks writhed between the water-ways, like serpents snaking their attenuated lengths overboard. Never did any sea light flash up a more startling, a wilder, a more ghastly tapestry. 'Twas like a painting in flames and ruddy stars upon the black canvas of the fog, and the hull, with its lines of ports like the keys of a piano, reeled slowly off on the lift of the brine, yard-arm to yard-arm, the beating canves of each red as the powder flag, and dying out up aloft like the reflection of a burning ship upon a cloud.

It was all too breathless for action aboard the *York*. Before a brace could be let go, before an order could be yelled, the stranger's flying-jib boom was crackling and gone, and her topgallantmast, with its canvas, was plastering the topsail; and then it was almost channel to channel, and the barque's poop was abreast of the *York's* quarter-deck.

"Great God!" cried Hardy.

A figure standing near the stranger's mizzen-rigging fell, and another figure fled aft, but at that instant some back draught of breeze thickened the crystals of the fog smoking close to the stranger's taffrail with a dense feathering of the black stench from the flares; the burning picture vanished out astern, as though to the fall of a curtain of midnight hue, the sounds of shouting sank, and in the hush that fell upon the *York's* deck, nothing was to be heard but the dreary lamentations of broken water under the bows, and the weeping noise of eddies under the counter.

"A close shave!" said Captain Layard, fetching a deep breath. "She has not hurt us, I think."

"I saw a man fall as if stabbed," said Hardy.

"Back the topsail! I'll keep the ship hove to till we can see," exclaimed the captain, whose attention, concentrated by the sudden blackness into which the ship had floated, was wholly in the manœuvre he had commanded.

The order was sung out, the sailors came groping their way aft to the main-braces, the yards were swung, and the ship was brought to a stand, lightly rolling her masts with a slap of hidden pinion, which made you think of some gigantic navy signal-man waving flags.

"My noble dog has saved my ship," exclaimed the captain. "I am a remarkable man!" And, to use a Paddyism, Hardy could *hear* in the skipper's speech the expression of exaltation which his face did undoubtedly wear. The skipper whistled, and in a few moments felt the snout of the fine black creature pressing lovingly against his thigh.

"Come along below," said he, passing his hand caressingly along the invisible feathers of the dog's back, "till I dry you and see how you look, and we'll take a peep at Johnny." And he and the dog vanished.

Just at that moment eight bells were struck. It was midnight, and the starboard watch must tend the ship till four. Whilst the last chimes were trembling into the damp, depressing, flapping sounds which clothed the obscured heights, the chief mate was hailed by a man whose voice proceeded from abreast of the gangway. Hardy stepped to the companion where the sheen lay, and exclaimed, "I am here." At the same moment Mr. Candy came out of the companion and joined him. Before

one could address the other, three figures entered the space of faint saturated light.

"Here's a man," said one of them, "that's jumped aboard us off the barque. He come up to me and asked to see the capt'n."

"Which is the man?" said Hardy, straining his sight.

One of them said, "I am, mister. I am French." And then in French he asked if Hardy spoke that tongue.

"No," answered Hardy. "Come below into the cabin to the captain."

And after a few words with Mr. Candy, who heard now for the first time that they had nearly been run into by a tall French barque, he went down the cabin steps, followed by the Frenchman.

In this interior plenty of light was shining, and it was as noontide after the midnight of the deck. The captain was near the table drying the dog with a cloth, and talking to him, and praising him as though he were a man, and the creature's mild and benevolent eyes looked up into his face, and you read gratitude and affection in the noble brute.

"Who's that?" said the captain, throwing the cloth down, and looking with a knitted brow at the Frenchman.

"He will explain, sir," Hardy answered.

"Softly," exclaimed the captain, "an angel lies asleep in that cabin," and with a melodramatic flourish of his arm, he pointed to the door of his berth.

The Frenchman looked at Hardy. He was a man of middle height, in a drill or thin canvas blouse, over which was buttoned at the throat a rough, old

jacket, the sleeves hanging loose. He wore blue trousers patched with black, stuffed into half-boots bronzed by wear and brine. His black hair curled upon his shoulders, and he held a cap fashioned out of some sort of skin. His face was a ghastly yellow; his lips a vivid red; his nose long, lean, and humped, and the black pupils of his eyes sparkled in the flashes of the swinging lamp amid their whites, which, by the way, were crimson with drink or gout, or both. It was a face to peer at you, malevolently, from a time-darkened canvas, very picturesque, very romantic, but something that you would not like to think was treading behind you on a lonely road.

"Who are you?" said the captain, putting his hand upon the head of the dog, in whose body a sort of rolling noise might have been heard, not quite a growl, but a note as of suspicion grumbling deep down below the throat.

"You speak French, I hope, sar?" said the man.

"And you speak English!" responded the captain, with a side look and a grin at Hardy. "It's no business of yours whether I speak French or not. Start your yarn."

And the man, clearly understanding what was said, began.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FRENCH MATE

I HAVE said that the man, clearly understanding the captain's meaning, began; but it was not a beginning, nor a middle, nor an end, that could be set down in black and white in that Frenchman's speech. It was most barbarous English, yet intelligible when helped along by the captain's and Hardy's questions. It must be given in plain words to be readable, and thus spoke that sinister-looking man:

"My name is Pierre Renaud. I am chief mate of the barque that was just now nearly running into you. We are from Cape Town to Bordeaux. That dog threatens my throat."

The man flashed the poniards of his eyes at the Newfoundland, who was like an organ with one key going, trembling in its shaggy and splendid bulk with a low, sulky, dangerous growling.

"Down!" said the captain, and the animal stretched its fore legs. "What brings you aboard us?"

"Fear," replied the man, with a slight shrug and a look of arching eyebrow at his questioner, and a roll of the eye over him, as though he saw something singular in his face and manner. "A man loves his

life and will jump to save it. I thought we should crush our bows in and founder."

"You did not stay to help your captain and encourage the men to preserve your ship," said Captain Layard, dabbing the dog's head to keep him quiet.

"The captain fell dead in a fright," responded the Frenchman, with another shrug, "and I chose to save myself."

"I saw a man fall," exclaimed Hardy. "Was that you that rushed along the poop?"

"How can I answer you?" replied the Frenchman. "We were all rushing."

"The captain fell dead!" said Captain Layard, in a musing way. "It's evident that French sea-captains die easily. When did you strike this fog?"

"I cannot say precisely. Some hours since," was the reply. "When we heard the barking of a dog we knew that a ship was near, and we judged by the barking that she was approaching. We lighted fires upon the decks, and when the glare gave us a sight of you the sailors lost their senses, and ran about shouting and screeching. They were too mad to obey orders. The captain fell as I ran past him, his hands clasped upon his heart, and as he had all along complained of the weakness of that organ, I am certain he died of disease."

"Your countrymen are not good sailors," said Captain Layard.

The Frenchman grinned ghastly, and Sailor rumbled afresh with a stiffening of his level fore legs as though he must rise.

"If I had been your captain," continued Layard, "I should have saved my flying-jib boom and

topgallantmast, and my sailors would not have rushed about and torn their throats open with the shrieks of fear — that womanly spirit!"

His smile was lofty, his self-complacency inexpressible, you guessed if there had been a mirror at hand he would have admired himself in it.

His talk, but not his face, was past the Frenchman's comprehension. He rolled his eyes upon Hardy, then upon a decanter half-full of rum, standing upon a swinging tray, timing the pulse of the sea.

"He asks for a drink, sir," said Hardy.

"Give him a tot," replied Captain Layard, "then let the second mate tell the bo'sun to find him a hole to lie down in. I don't like his looks."

He walked abruptly to his berth, followed by the dog, but before he entered he turned to the animal and exclaimed, "On deck, Sailor, and keep a lookout till the smother thins," and the Newfoundland sprang up the steps.

The Frenchman, with a smile at Hardy, touched his brow. The mate, without noticing the fellow's gesture, took the decanter of rum from the swing tray and gave him a glass of grog. As he handed the tumbler to the man, he said:

"Was your captain the man who stood near the mizzen-rigging?"

The Frenchman took a long pull at the glass before answering, and then said, "Yes."

"Do you think he fell dead, or was he struck down?" said Hardy, looking critically at the wild and dangerous face, whose eyes stared into the Englishman's vision with the fixity of a buried bayonet.

"He fell dead," was the answer, and down went the remainder of the grog.

"I believe I saw a man rush from him aft when he fell," said Hardy.

An expression of anger deepened the ugly devil's look of malevolence, but he held his peace.

"Your captain is dead and you are here," said Hardy. "Your second mate will take charge of the barque, I suppose?"

"Our second mate was drowned a week after we left the Cape," answered the Frenchman.

"What will the crew do?"

"They will go to hell!"

"Follow me," said Hardy, and they climbed the companion-steps.

The wind was sleeping. It was now a dead calm, and the fog steeped in night was lifting into the sight — conquering blackness off an ocean that seemed to be boiling upon some furnace of earth miles deep. Damp draughts of air blew with the rolling of the ship, and the canvas beat out hollow notes like the blasts of guns heard underground. The chief mate called the name of Mr. Candy, who stepped out of the impenetrable profound of the quarter.

"This man," said Hardy, talking in the skylight sheen, "is mate of the barque we were foul of just now. Take him forward to the bo'sun and find him a bed anywhere, and food if he needs it."

"I don't need it," said the Frenchman.

"Come along," said Mr. Candy, and they disappeared.

Hardy paused to listen and peer. There was nothing to see, but he might have heard a sound of

weeping all about, as though old ocean was mourning over its blindness. He then went to bed, but not to sleep right away. The Frenchman's insolent touching of his brow had accentuated his own deep suspicion of the captain's sanity, and very grave, though perplexed, reflection attended his thoughts of Layard, and the tragically perilous situation of the ship in charge of a lunatic so subtly mad that no one but his chief officer might have understanding enough to see how it was with him.

At eight bells in the middle watch he was aroused by Mr. Candy, and was on deck in a minute or two, for he was a smart man all around; the first at the yard-arm in reefing when his duties had carried him there, the first to spring to the cry, no matter the command, swift in relief, and for ever on the alert whilst the responsibility of life, cargo, and fabric was his. The fog was still very thick, but a thin wind had sprung up out of the east, and the streaming of the waters was like the shaling of a summer tide upon shingle. The braces had been manned when this weak air came, and the yards swung to hold the maintopsail aback; the ship rolled gently under the arrest of her canvas, and there was nothing to see and nothing to do but let the fog soak into the spirits.

"A spare bunk in the forecastle has been found for the French mate," Candy had said. The fellow had grumbled, muttered that he had been an officer on board his own vessel, and deserved better usage. Candy said he was lucky to save his life, and to find a bed in a British forecastle. The Frenchman growled that he considered himself important enough to sleep in the cabin.

"What did you say to that?" Hardy had asked.

"I said, 'You be damned!'" Candy replied.

Not until five bells, half-past six, in Hardy's watch did the fog show signs of breaking up. It thinned in places, and presently through the stretching ceiling of it the cold, pale dawn looked down upon the sea, and made it piebald with granite-coloured spaces. The breeze then freshened and the fog began to fly. Columns of it moved away stately like pillars of sand on the desert; it swept in Titan cobwebs between the masts; it sped like silken veils streaming from viewless fleeting spirits over the trucks. Wide vistas opened to windward; large blue eyes, soft with the moistness of their light, floated upon the trembling eastern brine. The sun darted a pale yellow lance, and as the captain put his head through the companion-hatch the scene of deep, saving a blankness in the west, opened around, and it was a shining morning with a bright sun and a blue sea and an azure sky and a pleasant breeze of wind.

Scarcely had the captain's head shown when Hardy, looking seawards over the quarter, exclaimed:

"There's the barque that fouled us last night, sir. She's got a wift at her mizzen-peak."

She could be no other vessel than the barque; the morning light was strong and she lay within a mile, and you could see that she had lost her foretopgallantmast and jib-booms. Her maintopsail was aback; she had clearly hove to after losing her mate and splintering clear of the ship and the smother. Her backed topsail curved inwards like carved ivory, her ruddy sheathing flashed its wet

length to the sun as the heave rolled her light, tall shape, with its slanting stare of black ports, upon the wide white line that girdled her.

"Why is she flying that gamp?" said the captain, taking a telescope out of the companionway; but before he levelled it at the ship he sent a glance full of scrutiny aloft to gather if his vessel had been hurt in the night, which was distinctly professional and sane, and quite enough to have convinced the Jacks that the "old man" knew the time of day, even if they suspected that the compass of his mind was wrong by points.

The gamp, as he termed the wift, consisted of the French flag stopped in the middle, that is, bound by a rope yarn into the appearance of a gamp umbrella. It tumbled at its block, and was a syllable of sea talk signifying "help!" The skipper whistled to his dog, which had kept a brave lookout throughout the night without relief, and which, seated on the heel of the starboard cathead, seemed to be listening with a grave countenance to the remarks of an ordinary seaman who was addressing him. The beautiful and dutiful creature came bounding aft and pawed his master to the shirt-front, rising nearly his height.

"You had better lower a boat and go and see what that fellow wants," said the captain, and he motioned the dog into the cabin and told it to wait there for breakfast.

"They're lowering a boat, and mean to come aboard of us," exclaimed Hardy, whose eyes were on the barque.

A boat dropped awkwardly from the vessel's tall side, and in a minute or two the gold of brandished

oars sparkled upon the delicate feathering of the water. The men were washing down aboard the *York*. In those days they carried a head pump which they rigged, and the bright water was passed in buckets and sluiced over the planks, the boatswain standing by and giving the scrubbers heart by his inspiriting cries, roars, and oaths. It was a common scene of shipboard life, full of colour, movement, and business.

Hardy looked along the decks for the French mate, but did not see him.

The captain exclaimed, "We'll send the fellow aboard in his boat. A good riddance. How some faces damn the souls which animate them! You seldom err in judging of a man by his looks. The expression is formed by the character. But affliction may deceive you, I allow; a harelip, for example, or a cock-eye."

"Shall I pass the word for the Frenchman, sir?" said Hardy.

"Oh, yes! oh, yes, rout him out of it!" answered the captain, smiling with that air of superiority which would have convicted him in the eyes of a keeper.

The word was passed, and the Frenchman, with the aspect of a pirate in a boy's book, rose through the scuttle as the boat came alongside. The man who had steered her scrambled into the mizzen-chains and sprang on to the quarter-deck with a salute of French courtesy. He was close-shaven and dark, habited in loose blue breeches and a jumper, and looked a good sailor spite his nationality, that was as marked in gesture and bearing as though branded on his brow.

"Can I speak to the captain?" said he, looking from Hardy to the skipper. His broken English was good.

"Glad you speak my tongue," said the captain. "What do you want?"

"I have served in American ships and can speak English," answered the man. "I am brother of the captain of that barque. He was stabbed last night and is dead. Our second mate, too, is dead. The first mate is missing. I'll swear he killed my poor brother, and then drowned himself. We are without a navigator. What are we to do?"

"You shall have a navigator," exclaimed Captain Layard, and he looked toward the forecastle, but the Frenchman had disappeared.

The man bowed and said, "It was a cold-blooded assassination. They had been quarrelling all the voyage. The villain chose the right moment, and the sea is easier than the guillotine."

"I saw your captain fall," said Hardy, "and the man that killed him is aboard us."

The fellow started, and so did his eyeballs in their sockets as he flashed them eagerly and fiercely along the decks where the sailors were scrubbing, and the boatswain encouraging them with the pleasant promptings of the British forecastle: "Scrub it out of 'em, my lads. D'ye want to drown the ship, you sojer? Slap it along the lee-coaming and be damned to you, Dick! Ain't it as thick as yer eyebrows there? Hurry up, hurry up with them buckets. Are we a hexcavator with the steam turned off?"

"A hand fetch that Frenchman out of the fok'sle and bring him aft," shouted Hardy.

"What do you mean to do with him?" asked the captain.

"I will call the crew together and consider," answered the man with a hideously significant glance at the main yard-arm.

"If you hang him," said the captain, "who'll navigate you?"

The fellow folded his arms tightly upon his breast and sank his head, sending a level look of patient hate through his eyelashes toward the forecastle.

"What's your rating aboard your ship?" inquired the captain.

"Boatswain, sir," was the answer, and the man did not turn his head to say it.

The dog at this moment came out of the cabin and stood with his fore feet on the plank at the coaming, staring at his master. He seemed to plead. The human spirit could not be more eloquent in the gaze; but the captain did not heed him, for just then the man who had been sent to fetch the Frenchman was coming aft, shoulder to shoulder with the Frenchman himself. The men forgot to scrub; the head pump ceased to gush; the boatswain left off conjuring and damning. All eyes were turned aft. The silence of a moment fell upon the ship, and nothing broke it but the low growling of the Newfoundland.

The Frenchman, fresh from the forecastle, was ghastly pale; his walk was defiant; when abreast of the main-hatchway he came more quickly than his companion, who stopped. He walked up close to the boatswain of the barque and said, in his native tongue:

"Well!"

The other dropped his arms; his hands were clenched, his eyes charged with that deadly cold light of hate which is more dangerous and fearful than the flame of fury. He spoke slowly in French, and what he said was this:

"You did not drown yourself, I see, after assassinating my brother."

"You lie in your throat! I sprang to save my life. Your brother is a live man for me."

"Liar, and villain, and execrable coward!"

He stepped to the rail and said to the men, in French of course — but you shall be told what he said:

"The assassin is in this ship. He pretends that he sprang for his life; he killed my brother, our navigator, and would have consigned us, helpless, to the desolation of the sea."

He returned, and was followed by a howl of passion from the boat alongside.

All in a minute, and just as the man was posting himself again in dramatic attitude close to the murderer, the huge Newfoundland, with an indescribable roar of rage, sprang with the whole weight of his body upon the French mate, and bore him to the deck with a thump of lead, like the fall of a twelve-pounder ball, and they thought that the brute's teeth had met in the wretch's throat. Hardy and the captain made a rush and dragged the animal off the fallen man, and the captain, grasping the creature by the coat of his neck, hauled him, growling fiercely, to the companion, and drove him below.

The man rose; his nose was bleeding, and after he had run the length of his sleeve along it his face

looked like a decapitated head placed on the upright body it had been struck from.

"I want to swing my yards," said Captain Layard. "I've been hove to all night through you. Take that man away; I don't parley-vous myself, and don't follow your talk. He'll navigate you home; he looks a good navigator." And he smiled with some sense of superiority of meaning, which made his face fitter for comedy than for the tragedy of this passage.

The French boatswain swept his hand with an infuriate motion toward the rail.

"If I go with this man he will kill me," said the blood-stained French mate.

"Not he. The ship wants a navigator," replied Captain Layard, with a cheerfulness supremely inconsequential.

"If you do not come," said the French boatswain, in his native speech, "I will call the men up, and they will throw you into the boat."

"Why can't you speak in English?" said Captain Layard. "He'll understand you, and we can follow your meaning."

The French mate turned on his heel and was beginning to walk slowly forward. As a cat springs when started by a dog, so sprang the barque's boatswain upon his brother's murderer. With the strength of the fiends before they were cast out he rushed the bleeding scoundrel to the rail and yelled to his men. The French mate grasped the mizzen-shrouds and struggled and kicked in awful silence; but in less than a minute three stout sailors, out of the four who manned the boat's oars, swarmed up. Eight enraged hands then tore the French mate

from the mizzen-rigging as the sweep of the hurricane uproots a tree. All in a heap, struggling, wrestling, groaning, they got him past the after-swifter, and to an order, shrieked through his teeth by the French boatswain, they hoisted him lengthwise to the rail, and dropped him into the boat. The French boatswain then made a sort of salaam bow to the captain and Hardy, and the whole four disappeared in the twinkling of an eye over the side amid shouts of laughter from the seamen who had been washing down the decks.

"Get all sail upon her, Mr. Hardy," said Captain Layard; "but I shall keep my topsail to the mast for awhile until I see what they mean to do with that barque."

The sailors dropped their buckets and scrubbing-brushes, and fell to howling at the halliards. Top-gallant and royal-yards rose, the mainsail was left to swing with its clews aloft, and the *York* was now a full-rigged ship, hove to, but clothed to her trucks, leaning with the swell as though by swaying she was knitting her frame together for the start.

A ship when under sail on the ocean is alive; watch her closely and you will discover that she has human intelligence in her methods of helping, and at the same time influencing, the reason that governs the helm and incarnate walks the quarter-deck or bridge. It was about a quarter-past seven; the sailors resumed the business of washing down; the decks sparkled as the brine flashed along the planks, and the boatswain stimulated this sweetening process by the inspiriting language of the land of the slush-lamp. The captain stood right aft watching the receding figure of the barque's fat boat. The placid

heave of the deep was crisped by the delicate crumbling foam curling from low, blue brows to the gentle gushing of the pleasant breeze, like some scene of swelling land enamelled with white flowers; the blankness to leeward had melted into azure, and it was all blueness and brightness, and you heard a song that was sweet with its summer note upon the harp-strings of the lofty spars.

"What will they do with him?" said the captain, going to the companion and resting his hand upon it as though in a moment he would descend.

"I am wondering, sir," answered Hardy, who stood near. "I should not like to be in the power of that bo'sun after I had killed his brother."

"Death drugs revenge; I would not kill my enemy," said the captain, putting on one of those incommunicable looks which always alarmed Hardy with thoughts of the ship's safety. "I would keep my brother's murderer alive — at sea. There is the middle-watch and the ghastly face of the moon! Whispers aloft and God's eye in every star! The ghostly figure should walk the quarter-deck with the assassin, should enter his berth with him, and sit beside his bunk and watch him. That is the revenge that kills the soul — the very thought makes me sweat."

His face changed into an expression of agitation, and with a sudden hurry he disappeared down the companion-steps.

Hardy watched the French boat draw alongside the barque. He wondered that the captain should have left the deck at such a time; it was another illustration of his insanity, no doubt. "He has gone to see to little Johnny, perhaps," the mate thought,

what had happened having faded in the chaotic muddle of his reason. Here was Captain Layard, who was determined to make a swift passage, keeping his ship hove to and going below to talk to his bright-haired boy, to help him dress maybe, and to muse in lopsided moralising over the medicine chest.

He took the glass, and levelled it at the barque, and saw the boat slowly ascending in spasmodic jerks to the davits. A few men dragged at the falls, and upon the port quarter of the poop the rest of the ship's company apparently had assembled, and were clearly discussing the recapture of the mate with the heat and passion of the French when excited. They gesticulated, they surged and reeled, and Hardy again saw one or another of them fling his hand in the direction of the fore yard-arm.

He could not see if the mate stood amongst them, and all forward was vacant deck, pulsating with the shadow of swinging sail. There was nothing else in sight all away round the girdle of the deep, though this was a frequented sea; and the two vessels, to a distant eye, might have seemed abandoned, so aimless was the look they got from the white cloths incurving to the masts.

About ten minutes after the boat had been hoisted, Hardy, who continued to watch the barque through the glass, saw several men go forward, and shortly after a man got into the fore-rigging, and crawled aloft and gained the fore-yard. The powerful lenses brought the barque close, and Hardy easily saw, as he followed the man sliding to the yard-arm, that he carried a tail-block in his hand. He made this block fast to the extremity of the yard, and whilst he

was doing this another man got into the fore-rigging holding a line, the end of which he gave to the fellow on the yard, who rove it through the block, and then came into the fore-rigging grasping the line, and both men descended to the deck.

Hardy rushed to the companionway and shouted down the hatch, taking his chance of the skipper hearing him, "They are going to hang that mate who killed the captain!"

A moment or two later up came Captain Layard.

"What's that you sang out?" he cried. "What's wrong? I'm with Johnny."

"Look for yourself, sir," answered Hardy, and he gave the glass to him. The captain pointed it. Mad or not mad, he knew what a yard-arm whip was, and what in this case it signified. He saw a crowd of men on the forecastle; he distinguished the figure of the mate, with his arms pinioned behind him, standing within a fathom of the rail rounding to the forecastle break. As he gazed he saw a man bandage the wretch's eyes with a red handkerchief. The same man next secured the end of the line to the man's neck, and the captain, with the telescope at his eye, began to mutter, and Hardy saw that his face had turned a greenish yellow, but he could not understand what he said, nor clearly perceive, as did the captain, all that was happening aboard that tragic barque, with its wift at the gaff-end beating the air like a human arm in agony.

In the captain's glass the bulk of the forecastle crowd melted and could not be seen on the main-deck. One who was left — and the muttering captain thought that he was the boatswain — held a book and seemed to be reading from it. The two

men kept the barque's victim pinned to the rail; the man who was reading closed his book and raised his arm straight up, looking toward the main-deck. The two men sprang back from the murderer, whose figure soared aloft, a ghastly shape of man flying wingless to the yard-arm.

"O my God!" cried Hardy, who saw it, and the crew of the *York*, watching that picture of short shrift and flying form, groaned and cursed with British hatred of the sudden execution, made dastardly by numbers.

They could see the man rushed to the nape of his neck to the yard-arm block, then fall, bringing up with a sudden belaying of that gallows-rope, and the hanging man began to swing like a pendulum of death midway betwixt the yard-arm and the feathering surface of the sea.

"Suppose he didn't do it?" said Captain Layard, letting the telescope sink and turning his face slowly to Hardy, who thought, even in that moment of horror and astonishment, that the captain had spoken nothing saner since the voyage began. "Fill on your topsail," continued the captain, in a trembling voice, his face distorted by passions and fancies beyond the penetration of reason. "I wouldn't have Johnny see that sight; they'll keep him swinging till he has ticked out the minutes his soul has taken to arrive in hell. Fill on your topsail, sir. And what'll the beggars do? They'll wait for help to come along."

The mate was walking a little way forward, and the captain, with his back upon the barque, stood muttering to himself. It was a pleasant breeze, and the ship took the weight of the sunlit gush of blue

wind with a buoyant heel, and then she broke the waters at the bow. In two hours the barque was glimmering like the crest of a sea in the liquid ether far and far astern. Her topsail was still aback, and doubtless, as Captain Layard had said, she was waiting for the help that must soon come along.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOST!

AND now for another week of this ship's adventure. There is little to record. As she drove to the south and west the breeze freshened by strokes, and the foam, white as daylight, seethed with a leeward roll to the channels, whose plates flashed jewelled fountains from her side.

It was noble sailing with a buckling stu'nsail boom, and every taut weather-shroud and backstay spirited the sea-whitening keel with sweet, clear songs of rejoicing. All the crew loved little Johnny, and the great Newfoundland, placid, stately, and benign, was ever at his side, courting the boy, with looks of love, to play. Always in this fine weather the sunny-haired lad, in the miniature clothes of the bluejacket, would of a dog-watch take his drum upon the forecastle, and roll out a good rattling accompaniment to the cheerful piping of the whistle. Then the sailors would dance whilst the ship's stem rent the water into sweat, and the bow-sea rolled away in glory, and the western heavens grew majestical with sunset.

And all this time no man spoke a hint as to the captain's state of mind, because, as I have said, the sailor has no eyes for the human nature of the quarter-deck until it should become as visible and demonstrative as a windmill in a wind.

This Captain Layard was *not;* his moods and motions were of too subtle a sort to be interpretable by the forecastle gaze, and all the strange unconscious discoveries of himself he limited to Hardy, scarcely ever speaking to the second mate unless to give him an order. But even when he talked to Hardy, no man could have sworn that he was madder than most dreamers are. It was only, as Hardy thought, that his talk was so cursedly inconsequential. He reminded him of a diver who if you look to port comes up to starboard, whose spot of emergence is always somewhere else.

One day, at the end of the time just spoken of, the ship was stretching her length along a wide blue sea enriched with running knolls, shadowed by themselves into deepest violet, aflash with sudden meltings of foam which whitened the windward picture, and ran with smooth curves from the leeward yeast that rushed into the water from the side.

The captain was below. It was about ten o'clock in the morning. There was now a sting in the light of the sun, as he floated upwards in an almost tropic glory, undimmed by the flight of little clouds which hinted at the Trade. Our friend the chief mate, Hardy, was walking up and down the weather-side of the quarter-deck. A sailor stood at the wheel trim for his trick; he was a British seaman, his easy floating figure and swift look to windward, aloft, and into the compass bowl put thoughts into one's head of the time when men like him wore pigtails down their backs and fired the fury of hell, as the Spaniard said to Nelson, into the gunports and sides of the audacious enemy.

There was music on that quarter-deck, for

Johnny, who was admiral of that ship, the captain being very much under him, had sent for the whistle, and the sailor had come at once, bringing his music with him. He was seated upon the skylight, and was piping that cheerful song, "A Wet Sheet and a Flowing Sea," all over the ship to the delight of the watch on deck, who worked the nimbler for it; and Johnny made martial music of that sea-song with his drum.

The ship rushed along with festive lifts and falls and triumphant choruses in her weather-rigging as the swing of the sea brought her masts to windward, and all was beauty and sunlight, and white phantoms of little sailing clouds, and swelling canvas yearning to the azure recess at which the ship, like some goddess of the sea, was pointing with her spear of jibboom.

Presently the boy grew tired; the piper went forward, and as the captain's servant came along Johnny gave him his drum and sticks to carry below. The great Newfoundland was lying at its length beside the skylight, and Johnny sat upon him, and lifting his ear talked into it, and the dog grunted in affectionate reply. But little boys soon tire of anything save sweets, and Johnny joined Hardy, and they walked together. The lad had a very inquisitive mind, and was constantly wanting to know. He began to question Hardy about the ship. What is the good of that little sail right on top up there? Why didn't they give each mast one great sail? Wouldn't that save trouble? Couldn't they let it down, and tie it up, as they did that middle sail there, when the weather grew nasty? Wouldn't Hardy be glad to get home? How old was he? Was he glad

to be so old? Wouldn't he rather be eight? After much interrogative conversation of this sort he felt tired, and strayed from Hardy's side and walked about the quarter-deck, looking around him as though he wished to pick up something which he could throw at the sea.

Going right aft, abaft the man at the wheel, his arch, sweet, wondering eyes were taken by the sight of some Mother Carey's chickens; also the splendid, dazzling stream of wake that was rushing off in snake-like undulations attracted him. A stretch of ash-white grating protected the wheel-chains and the relieving gear. It stood a little way under the taffrail and was not very high above the deck, and the tiller worked under it.

Unnoticed by Hardy, Johnny got upon this grating to watch the sea-birds, also to obtain a view of the place where that giddy, boiling, meteoric river of foam began. A sea-bird is a thing of beauty, which is a joy to a little boy upon whom the shades of the prison-house have not yet begun to close; and the dazzle of spinning foam hurling seawards is also a beauty and a wonder and a miracle, as are many other things in this pleasant world of flowers and valleys and streams; for I have seen a little child pick a daisy and view it with greater transport than could even be felt by a beautiful young woman bending with beaming eyes over the bracelet of diamonds with which her lover has just clasped her wrist.

Johnny fell upon his knees and crawled upon the grating to the taffrail, the flat surface of which he kneeled upon, peering over and down betwixt the gig and the taffrail to see the place where the white

water began under the counter. The poor little fellow overbalanced himself, and Hardy, whose eye was upon him in that instant, saw him vanish.

"O my God!" he shrieked. "Man overboard!" he shouted. "Hard down! hard down!"

And whilst the wheel went grinding up to windward, and whilst the sails aloft were beginning to thunder to the weather sweep of the rushing bows, Hardy, tearing off his coat and waistcoat and shoes, leaped from the quarter into the boiling yeast and struck out.

Scarcely had he shot overboard when the great dog Sailor, springing up with a swift movement of his head around, leapt like a darting flame on to the rail from which Hardy had plunged, and jumped. There was plenty of foam in the sea, and it was almost blinding Hardy, who swam strongly; but it did not blind the dog, who saw the mate but not the child, and made for him. A sea swept Hardy to its summit, and he perceived the child some three or four cables' length distant; a head of foam rolled over that sun-bright speck and it disappeared, and as Hardy sank into the trough the dog, that stemmed the brine like some swiftly-urged boat, caught him by the collar and forced him round in the direction of the ship, whose main-yards were now aback and one of whose lee quarter boats was rapidly descending, with the captain on the grating, waving his arms in frantic and heart-subduing pantomime.

"Sailor!" roared Hardy, struggling with his whole force to round the noble creature's head in the direction where he had seen the bright point vanish. "O God! doggie, dear doggie! Johnny is overboard, and drowning! Go for him, Sailor! go for him, Sailor!"

And buoyed by the magnificent swimmer whose teeth were in his collar, he stiffened his breast and pointed. But the Newfoundland, who had not seen Johnny fall, had leapt to save the life of Hardy, and with bitter, blighting despair in his heart the gallant young fellow felt the beautiful animal at his side urging him irresistibly up one slope and down another in the direction of the ship, with its dreadful figure of human anguish gesticulating and shouting on the grating.

The hearts that bent the blades rowed with love of the boy and a maddening passion to save him. They came to Hardy first and dragged him and the dog over the gunwale, and a man standing up in the stern-sheets steered the boat for the place where the little fellow had last been seen from the deck of the ship. But they rowed in vain. Sodden with brine, and half blinded by the tears of a manly sailor's heart, the mate strained his vision over the running seas, and knew, O God! and knew that Johnny had sunk for ever.

"Oh, what a pity!" said one of the men.

"The dog could have saved him," exclaimed another.

"No, he was gone before the dog could have reached the place," said Hardy, and he sank upon a thwart and covered his face.

The Newfoundland laid his massive jaws upon his knee in caress and in encouragement, knowing he was saved, and loving him as those majestic creatures love the life they have torn from the grasp of death. The men, with the lifted blades of their oars sparkling in the sun, gazed silently around, but Johnny was gone. The tall seas seethed, and the

boat fell away with their melting heads and rose buoyant to the height of the next slant, but Johnny was gone, and after they had lingered half an hour the men, to the command of Hardy, turned the boat's head toward the ship, and rowed away from that sun-lighted scene of ocean grave which already the hand of viewless love had strewn with flowers and garlands of foam.

Captain Layard was standing with tightly folded arms beside the skylight when Hardy arrived on board, and approached him, shuddering with grief and with the exhaustion that attends even a brief spell of battling with the rolling seas of the ocean. The unhappy father's face was utterly unintelligible in expression. And still a critical eye, with good capacity for subtle penetration, would in this time of sudden and awful bereavement have witnessed in that poor man's face the dangerous condition of his soul.

The men who were hoisting the boat pulled with askant looks full of respect and rough sympathy, and the boat rose in silence, so touched were the sailors' hearts by this sudden loss of the bright-haired little darling of the ship. The Newfoundland, shaking a shower from his coat, came to the captain, seemed to know that grief was in him, and looked up at him.

"Where is my little Johnny?" said the captain to Hardy, in a firm, sharp tone.

Hardy could not answer him.

"There is no good in telling me that he's not on board this ship," said the captain, letting fall his arms and swaying in a strange way with the leeward and weather rolls of the arrested vessel. "Where is *he hidden?*"

He stepped to the companion and shouted down, "Johnny, Johnny, my darling! Come up with your drum! The men want music! Come up with your drum, my Johnny!"

The sailors belayed the falls of the boat and secured her, and slowly walked forward, never a one of them speaking. The captain went below, calling "Johnny." Mr. Candy came up to Hardy. Both he and the watch below had rushed on deck to that dreadful cry at sea of "Man overboard!" and to that sudden change you feel in a ship when the yards of the main are swung aback. All the concern that a man with white eyelashes and pale hair and a skin like a cut of roasted veal can look was in Candy's face as he said:

"This blow has turned the captain's head, sir."

"I cannot speak to you," Hardy answered.

"Let me fetch you some brandy, sir," said the second mate. Hardy raised his arm. Candy walked to the quarter and stood staring at the sea where the child had sunk. The Newfoundland dog was growing uneasy. You saw by the creature's motion of head and by other signs that he knew something was wrong. Twice he growled low and walked round the skylight smelling the planks, then coming to the companionway he listened and sprang down the steps.

Hardy stood waiting for the captain. It was not for him to order the topsail-yard to be swung until the captain spoke. All the seamen were forward standing in groups waiting for the command, and the boatswain, in the face of the general grief, could find nothing for them to do until the quarter-deck started them.

It filled Hardy with anguish, though he was only a mate in the British Merchant Service, the one unrecognised condition of our national life, spite of the pleading of its heroic traditions and the claims of its English seamen of to-day, upon the admiration of their country, to think of the poor, desolate, brain-afflicted father below, seeeking in his madness his beloved little boy. He knew that this man had tenderly loved the mother of that child and mourned her loss with a sailor's heart, and that the bright and spirited lad, whom God had summoned, had been his constant companion since his wife's death, the light of his life, the flower whose fragrance had sweetened the loneliness of command.

He stood waiting, soaked to the flesh. Suddenly the captain appeared.

"Johnny is not below," he said. "He's somewhere in the ship. When did you see him last, Mr. Hardy?"

And still Hardy could not answer him. The Newfoundland had followed his master, and the whole frame and benign eyes of the noble creature, to whom and to whose like man denies a soul, yielded preternatural token of loss and disquiet that was human in eloquence.

The captain did not seem to heed Hardy's silence and manner. He looked with great eagerness and a certain wildness along the decks, and then putting his hand to the side of his mouth, with his face turned forward, where the men stood watching him, he shouted in an imperious voice as though he would frighten an answer from the concealed child:

"Johnny! — It is strange," said he, in a low voice, turning and looking at Hardy. "Is he aloft?" And

he turned his eyes up and scrutinised the rigging, the tops, the crosstrees, the yards, stepping to the rail so as to obtain a view past the leaches of the canvas.

"Shall I order those yards to be swung, sir, and way got upon the ship?" said Hardy, speaking with difficulty.

"I want Johnny," was the captain's answer, and he walked slowly forward, looking to right and left of him, as though the little lad must be in hiding somewhere, flat beside a forward coaming or behind a hencoop, or under the long-boat, for his figure had been small, and he could have concealed himself within the fakes of the halliards coiled down upon a pin.

The men drew back, scattered in a kind of dissolving way, gazed with sheepish looks of sympathy, one rugged man with damp eyes, for he too had lost a son beloved with the rough love of a heart unhardened by salt and toil.

"Has any man among you," said the captain, bringing his head out of the galley door — for the child had been a frequent guest of the cooks of the ships he had sailed in: they would make him jam tarts and little cakes, and his prattle to the fellows was as cheering to them as the song of a canary — "has any man among you," he said, "seen my little boy?"

"I don't think you'll find him forward, sir," answered the boatswain. "Jim, jump below and see if he's in the fok'sle."

The sailors exchanged looks which seemed to suggest that they thought it kind and wise in the boatswain to humour the captain, whose mind, to them, appeared a little shaken and made uncertain *by the shock* of his loss.

"No, I'll trust no man's eyes but mine," exclaimed the captain, with a lofty expression of face, and, going to the scuttle, which is the little hatch through which the seamen drop into their parlour, he put his legs over and descended.

One man only was in this forecastle. He was the young seaman who had played the whistle whilst Johnny beat the drum. He started up at the sight of the captain, amazed by a visit that was unparalleled in his experience or recollection of forecastle story. His face showed marks of unaffected distress, and indeed this rude but sympathetic heart had been seated for some minutes prior to the captain's entrance, with bowed head resting in his wart-toughened palms, thinking of the child and his sudden death.

It was a strange, gloomy interior. The swing of the lamp kept the shadows on the wing, and oilskins and coats swayed upon the ship's wall to the solemn plunge of the bows, and you heard the roar of the smitten and recoiling surge in a low thunder, like the sound of a railway train striking through the soil into a vault. Some bunks went curving into the gloom past the light which fell through the hatch, and a few hammocks stretched their pale, bale-like lengths under the upper deck. Here, too, were sea-chests — a few only — and odds and ends of sea-boots, and the raffle of the sailor's ocean home.

"Where's my son? Is he down here?" exclaimed the captain, haggard, and with something dreadful in his looks in that light, uttering the words as peremptorily as ever he delivered an order on the quarter-deck.

The young fellow gazed aghast at him in silence.

The captain, who did not seem to heed whether he was answered or not, went to the bunks and examined them one by one, knelt and looked under them, felt the sagged canvas of the hammocks. Oh, it was pitiful!

"He's not here," he exclaimed, turning to the young sailor. "Have you got your whistle handy? Pull it out and pipe. The music will bring him with his drum."

The young man went to his bunk and took the whistle from the head of it. His face was full of awe and wonder; it was a bit of psychology, a trick or two above all *his* art of seamanship.

"What shall I play, sir?" he asked, in a shaking voice, with a glance up through the scuttle at the men gathered near and listening.

"What's his favourite tune?" said the captain.

The young fellow reflected, and answered, "'Sally come up,' sir. It runs well with the drum."

"Play it," said the captain.

The young fellow put the whistle to his lips and blew. The contrast between the merry air, shrilling in the forecastle and out through the hatch into the bright wind, and the captain's half-triumphant face of expectancy would have melted a heart of steel. The poor man stepped under the little hatch and shouted up, "On deck there!"

"Sir," answered the boatswain, showing himself.

"Can this whistle be heard aft?"

"Yes, sir."

"Watch a bit, and report if he's coming."

The young seaman, who was nearly heartbroken

with his obligation of playing, continued to pipe, and you beheld a vision of dancing sailors, and swelling canvas reverberating the rattle of the drum.

The captain waited under the hatch, his poor face charged with ardent expectation. He might have overheard a gruff voice say, "It oughtn't to be allowed to go on. He'd get all right if he'd go to his cabin, where it 'ud come to him." But he paid no heed.

Suddenly the whistling ceased, and the young fellow, flinging his whistle into his bunk, cried, "It's choking me, sir."

The captain looked at him, and saying, "Where is Johnny?" climbed through the hatch and, without a word to the sailors, walked slowly aft.

The whole ship seemed to tremble throughout her frame with every lift and fall, as though like something alive she was now startled by this strange delay, and the foretopmast studdingsail curved with the weight of the wind from its boom, and no doubt, in the language of sailcloth, cursed the maintopsail for stopping its eager drag.

Hardy stood beside the second mate, to leeward, on the quarter-deck, and watched the captain coming aft. The great dog in a leap gained his master's side and marched with him, looking with beautiful sagacity up into the poor man's face. The captain walked with his eyes fixed upon the sky, just over the sea-line astern, but if speculation were in his gaze it was not interpretable; he saw, or seemed to see, something beyond the blue haze of distance, and thus he watched it, without speaking to the two mates, or turning his eyes upon them, until he came

to the companion-hatch, down whose steps he went, followed by the dog.

Noon was near and an observation must be taken. Hardy, whose clothes were plastered by water upon him, said to Candy:

"We must get an observation and swing the yards. This blow has thrown his mind off its balance, and he might not thank us later if we should go on as though he were responsible."

"I agree with you, sir," said Candy.

Hardy called to the boatswain, who came quickly.

"You know the law of the sea as well as I do," said the mate, "and I don't want you and the men to believe that I have taken charge of the ship even for five minutes because I mean to get way upon her."

"She wants it," said the boatswain, looking forward along the ship as though she were a horse.

"I must get an observation," continued Hardy, "and you and the men will judge that the captain would wish me to do what he himself would do if his terrible loss had left him capable of doing anything."

"It don't need reasoning about, sir," said the boatswain.

"Hands lay aft and swing the maintopsail-yard!" shouted Hardy. "Lee mainbrace! Mr. Candy, will you step below for your sextant? Kindly bring mine."

Candy went below. The men came running aft. But the shadow of death was upon the ship, bright, boundless, and streaming with the life of the wind as were heaven and ocean, and the sailors dragged

the great yards round in silence. The ship heeled over a little more to the full swell of her canvas, and as Hardy took his sextant from Candy she was bursting the blue surge into white glory, and the leeward foam was passing fast and faster.

CHAPTER IX.

THE INDIAMAN'S BOAT

THE seas were breaking fast and fierce from the bows, and the wake flashed into the windy distance in a fan-shaped splendour as of sunshine, and hands were aloft furling the fore and mizzen royals, and some fore-and-aft canvas was rattling hanks and lacing on their stays to the drag of down-hauls; the ship was sonorous with the music of the sea, and by looking over the weather side you could have seen the green sheathing sweating with foam, storming through the dazzling smother like a wounded dolphin whose blood is sweet to dolphins; yet this was but a fragment of the magnificent picture of foaming seas and flying cloud, with the lofty swelling ship shearing through the heart of the day in a thunder-storm of prisms and of spray, lovely as the heights of heaven when some stars are green and some shine like the rose.

Hardy came on deck. He stood and looked about him, refreshed by a shift of clothes and by a nip of grog. He had worked out his sights, and before mounting the steps had stood a minute at the captain's door listening; he heard the poor man's voice, and judged by its solemn imploring note that he was praying, but the noise of the sailors above made

him hurry, and though it was his watch below he felt that he was in command, and that the safety of the ship was in his hands.

Any seaman will understand this mate's critical and difficult situation. A captain is not to be lightly deposed; drunken captains and — unless they grow frantic — mad captains must be obeyed or endured or it is mutiny, with heavy penalties awaiting the arrival of the ship; and the mate of a merchantman may, though by conscientious act, lose power of earning bread for himself and his home unless as a foremast hand, for the law is hard, and the ship-owner harder still.

"You had better take the mainsail off her, Mr. Candy, and furl the main-royal," said Hardy. "She has more than she wants."

The stu'nsail was in and so was the boom, and Hardy gave other directions, but they need not be repeated because minuteness is tedious, and the language of the sea cryptic to millions. When Sheridan was asked how the poetaster described the phœnix, he answered, "Just as a poulterer would!" The poulterer is not good in art, and the beak, talons, and all are merits when left out.

It was about a quarter to one, and the cabin dinner would be coming aft soon. The cook was busy in his galley, and black smoke was smothering the bulwarks abreast from the chimney. Hardy paced the deck watching the seamen at work, Candy superintended the business. There was plenty for the mate to think of. The grief planted in his kind heart, by recollection of his hopeless effort to rescue the poor drowned child, was overwhelmed by thoughts of the captain, his undoubted madness, the

state of the ship; and then his mind on a sudd went away to Julia Armstrong; he wondered wh would be her fortune, if luck would attend her India, if her love for him — he would not prete aught else to himself — would hold her unwilling remain, that she might return in the vessel and me him once more. "In which case," he declared himself, "I will marry her and chance it."

The ship was rushing onward like a shooting st and the wind clothed the sails with the thunder its power; but she was comfortable and dry. T bright bursts were flung clear of her by the rush the breeze, and she took the seas with that perfe grace of leap and curtsey which sails alone do giv

As Hardy walked, the cabin servant came up him and reported dinner on the table.

"Have you told the captain?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is he at table?"

"Yes, sir."

Hardy went below. The captain was in his acc tomed place cutting at a big meat pie; his brow w knitted, and with the whole strength of his soul seemed intent upon this job of cutting the pie. H long hair and the hair upon his cheeks and ch accentuated the expression of his pale face, whi was one of wildness and of grief so subtle that might scarcely be known as grief by the heart th ached with it; but when he raised his eyes, Hard saw a darkness upon his vision as though t shadow of death was on his eyelids.

"Will you have some of this pie?" said he, qui sanely.

"Thank you, sir," answered Hardy.

"We'll shift for ourselves," said the captain, turning to the attendant. "Bring whatever else there is in a quarter of an hour."

The man left the cabin. The captain, with knife and fork poised, without serving Hardy viewed him intently during a short passage of silence, and then said:

"Johnny has strayed away from this ship and he's left his drum behind him, but," he added, smiling with his heart-moving smile of superiority, "I shall find him."

He loaded a plate and thrust it at the length of his arm toward Hardy, who took it.

"Are not you eating, sir?" said Hardy.

"How's the ship?" was the answer.

Hardy reported the sail she was under. The question, the all-important question, whether sights had been taken, was not asked. The captain took a piece of meat out of the pie and gave it to the Newfoundland, who sat beside him on the deck.

"I don't like rich clergymen," he said, abruptly. "The man who steers his ship to the glowing gates of heaven should be rich in heart and love. The precious freight is that; let him despise the devil's cargo. I once said to a wealthy parson, 'Take up your cross and follow me. D'ye remember it, sir? but you and the like of you give your cross to the coachman and get inside.'"

He spoke this in a voice of thunder, and his face was grotesque. Hardy was eating with difficulty. The chatter of the afflicted brain is a pain to the hearer, for the sane strokes make the inconsequential talk as ghastly as the lifelike motions of the electrified corpse.

From time to time the dog got up and moved about the cabin sniffing. He was missing Johnny. He would come to Hardy's side and turn his gentle, affectionate eyes up at the mate's face in such dumb inquiry as would be holy if it were human; then he would go to the captain and do the like. The poor man played with some meat out of the pie, but did not eat. He had been educated at a great public school and his speech and voice had the culture of breeding, and the lapses and diversions of the talk that he addressed to Hardy made his language more pitiful than shocking. He as often spoke wisely as insanely, but Hardy saw, even whilst he sat, that the loss of his boy had confirmed in him his lamentable prepossession. He was mad, but in such fashion that unless he acted visibly the madman's part the crew would fail to see it.

The attendant came down with more food for the cabin, and this the captain did not touch. Presently he abruptly rose and entered his berth, reappeared with his cap on, and slowly stepped up the companion-ladder.

It was Hardy's hope that the poor fellow might give such orders as would induce the men to suspect him mad, although he felt they would believe he was only temporarily deranged by the bitter loss which had left him heart-broken; and yet some heedless or absurd order, some unintelligible shifting of the course, for example, some needless setting or reduction of canvas, must act like a surgical operation and quicken their scent, which would help him to come to a decision as to the right thing to be done; and whilst he went on munching his dinner he found himself repeatedly glancing at the telltale compass

and listening for the captain's voice. But the ship sped steadily straight forward, and the captain remained silent though his tread was audible.

A little while before the mate had finished his dinner Mr. Candy came below. This was unusual: in the ordinary movement of discipline he should have waited to be relieved by Hardy.

"The captain told me to go and get my dinner, sir," said the second mate.

"All right," said Hardy.

Mr. Candy sat down and began to help himself. Hardy had no particular fondness for this man: he was the son of a pilot, and one of those people who add nothing to the dignity of a service which in its day, in point of breeding, in all art of seamanship, in structure of vessel, was as good as the Royal Navy. Witness, for example, the men and ships of John Company; for if no line-of-battle ships flew the flag of that company, and the flags of the owners of fleets of stately craft, ships of commerce had been and were still then afloat as lordly in build, as gracious and commanding in star-searching heights, as the finest of the frigates of Britannia. But Candy was second mate of the ship, and to that degree was important.

"Captain Layard is very down," said Hardy. "It's a cruel bad job. I loved the little boy, and the dog that loved him too wouldn't let me save his life."

"It was plucky of you, sir, to jump overboard," said the second mate. "All the time the captain walks he looks to port and starboard, hunting like with his eyes over the sea for the little drummer. Strange he can't satisfy himself that the younker is drowned, dead and gone."

He was feeding heartily, and spoke in the intervals of chewing.

"This shock," said Hardy, who saw that the man was not to be talked to confidentially, "may have a little weakened the poor father's mind for a time. We'll assume it so for the common preservation; therefore, in your watch on deck should he give orders which might prove him thinking more of Johnny than the ship, call me at once."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

This said, Hardy went to his berth to smoke a pipe and get some rest, for he could not know what lay before him, and sleep is precious at sea.

At four o'clock Candy aroused him. The captain, he learnt, had been below an hour. Nothing worth reporting had happened during Candy's watch. Hardy went on deck, and did not see the captain throughout the first dog-watch. The breeze was slightly scanting; the main-tack was boarded and the main-royal loosed and set. Hardy, like a good many other chief mates, was always for carrying on whenever he was in charge, and the breeze blew and the girls of the port he was bound to always hauled with a will at his tow-rope. Besides, there was the night's detention to be made good, and the clipper was making it good as she sheared through the coils of the sea, boiling in dim rose to the westering light. It was like a field of hurdles to a favourite, and she swept them with a bounding keel, slinging rainbows as she went, and the surge sang in thunder to the melodies of the rigging.

Hardy's whole thoughts concerned the captain. He quite remembered that in the cabin of the stricken father stood a medicine-chest full of deadly

poisons. Would he take his life? Full often the demon of madness goes on beckoning to the ghastly Feature till it springs. But what could the mate do? It was not within his right to remove the chest. If he durst act in any way he would lock up the captain at once, but he had the talk and opinions of a crew of seamen to consider, and if the captain should be revisited by the same degree of sanity that had enabled him to navigate the vessel to this point, how would Hardy stand, supposing — and supposition here involved a very possible contingency — that the captain, to preserve his own position, should charge him with the ugliest breach of discipline a merchant officer could be guilty of?

He did not meet the captain again till the supper hour. The ship was then under all plain sail. The west was glowing like a furnace, and the ocean was calming to the softening of the breeze. The captain came from his berth into the cabin as Hardy stood beside the table. The meal was ready, and they sat down. There was a curious look of satisfaction in the captain's face. The acute eye of Hardy easily saw that some soothing delusion was in possession of the man. He asked two or three questions about the ship, and quite sanely said:

"What did you make the latitude and longitude to be at noon?"

Hardy answered the question.

The captain began to eat hungrily, and all the time his face gave token of an inward content, lifting indeed into the pleasure of assured expectation; but somehow there were visible in this lunatic web of emotion threads of cunning clearly perceptible to Hardy, who, perhaps, as the son of a doctor whose

professional experiences he had often listened to, was able to see a little deeper than the vision of a plain seaman could penetrate.

"There is no doubt, Mr. Hardy," suddenly said the captain, "that I shall be able to find Johnny."

"I hope so, sir," answered Hardy, gravely.

"I have no doubt," exclaimed the captain with a sparkle of triumphant cunning lighting up his eyes. "I must be patient and wait, for I've got to hear where he is."

Hardy was silent.

"It may come to me in a dream," continued the poor man, "or it may be revealed to me in a whisper. I believe with Milton that the air is thronged with millions of spiritual beings. I have in my watches, when a mate, heard whispers in the dark! I believe in God the Father Almighty" — and he recited the Apostles' Creed whilst he stroked the head of his dog, who sat at his side. "It is a glorious confession, Mr. Hardy. What should make a man more religious than the sea life? They think us a breed of blasphemers, but to whom is the glory and the majesty and the power of the Supreme unfolded if not to the sailor? We behold the birth of the day, and witness the sublimity of the Spirit in the glittering temples of the east, from which the sun springs, to reveal the marvel of the ocean and the heavens to the sight of man; and we witness the death of the day, gorgeous and kingly in its departure, over which the angels spread a funeral pall sparkling with the diamonds of the night."

He pressed his hands to his brow and sighed with that long tremor in which the broken heart often vents itself.

The night passed quietly. The breeze yet slackened and was blowing a gentle wind at midnight. There was a moon somewhere in the sky, and her light fell upon the dark waters, and the sight of the small seas, curling in frosted silver through the radiance, was as beautiful as the picture of the ship stemming softly, her canvas stirless as carven shields of marble.

The captain came and went throughout the night, and no man aboard saving Hardy would have dreamt of holding him mad and irresponsible. Candy, when his watch was up, had nothing to report but this: that the skipper would walk the deck fast, abruptly halting at the weather-rail to stare at the ocean in pauses running into minutes, then crossing to the lee-rail to stare again in passages of dumb scrutiny. What more conceivable than that the afflicted man should be full of the memory of his lost child, and that he should break off in his walk to meditate upon the mighty grave in whose heart his little one was sleeping?

Candy thought thus, and so did the helmsman, who would find the men he talked to about it of his own mind when he was relieved at the wheel and went forward.

And so the night passed into the sad light of dawn, which brightened into the glory of a morning full of sunshine. The breeze had shifted three points, and the ship was sailing slowly with the yards square and the weather-clew of the mainsail up.

Now was to happen the strangest incident in this ship's adventure. It was Nelson who said that nothing is impossible or improbable in sea-affairs.

There is no invention of man that can top the grim, the grotesque, the beautiful, the sublime, or the touching facts which the great mystery of liquid surface yields to human experience.

A seaman, who was sitting astride of the starboard foretopsail yard-arm, busy with marline-spike on some job that the lift needed, hailed the deck.

"Where away?" shouted Hardy from the quarter-deck.

"Right ahead, sir," answered the man, who looked a toy sailor, his white breeches trembling, and the round of his back sharp-lined against the blue.

Hardy fetched the glass, and going to the mizzen-rigging pointed it. He caught it instantly. It was a boat, how far off it was impossible to say, for distance, when a small object grows visible, is very difficult to measure with the eye at sea, but she was plain to the naked sight of the man on the yard-arm; the telescope brought her close, and Hardy counted five figures in her, one of whom was standing on the foremost thwart waving something, — a shirt or a piece of canvas. Her mast was stepped, but the sail was down, and she lay waiting, vanishing and reappearing as the shallow hollows ran sucking under her.

When Hardy dropped the glass he found the captain by his side.

"What is in sight?" he exclaimed, speaking with something of breathlessness, as though his heart was tightened.

"A ship's boat, sir, with five people in her," answered Hardy.

"I shall find him," exclaimed the captain, and the old look of superiority to all human intelligence,

and the pathetic sparkle of cunning with which the diseased brain will often illuminate the eye, were perceptible to Hardy. "Give me the glass, sir."

The captain levelled it and was a long time in looking, and all the time he looked he breathed slow and deep like a man in heavy slumber.

"Stand by to back the foretopsail," he exclaimed. "Let a hand be ready with a line and others to help them aboard, for twice I have fallen in with people so weakened by distress and famine and thirst — O God, that awful part of it — that we have lifted them like babies over the side."

Presently the boat was close under the bow; the foretopsail was aback, and the ship, heaving slowly without way, was alongside the little fabric.

Her people were four men and a woman. The men were seamen, apparelled in such clothes as the merchant sailor went clad in. They staggered a little as they stood up, and one in the bow reeled as he caught the end of the line. The woman was sitting in the stern-sheets. She wore a straw hat, the shadow of whose brim darkened her face as a veil might. She was clothed in a black jacket, and the material of her dress was dark. Her head was a little sunk, as though she was too weary to hold it erect.

The captain, overlaying the rail, stared with bright devouring eyes into the boat. He did not seem to heed the people in her; he was looking for something else.

"Are you able to help the lady aboard?" shouted Hardy.

"No, sir," answered the man who had caught the line; "we've been adrift two days."

His weak voice proclaimed the truth of his words. At the sound of Hardy's cry the woman in the stern-sheets lifted her head, and the shadow of the brim of her hat slipped off her face. Hardy instantly recognised her.

"Great God!" he exclaimed.

He was struck motionless by astonishment, but his faculties rallied in a breath; in a minute he had sprung into the main chains, and a jump carried him into the boat.

"O Mr. Hardy!" shrieked the girl, and she tried to rise to clasp him, but her exhaustion was too great and she could only sob.

"On deck there!" shouted Hardy, who was usurping all the privileges of the captain in that moment of tumultuous sensations. "Send down a chair and bear a hand." And whilst this well-understood order was being executed — it meant simply a tail-block at the main yard-arm and a line rove through the block with a cabin-chair secured to the end of it — and whilst the four nearly spent sailors of the boat were being helped by the men in the ship, Hardy was talking to Julia.

"What a meeting! What has happened to your ship?"

Her lips were pale and a little cracked, her eyes were languid, and dim with tears, a shadow as of hollowness lay upon each cheek. She spoke with difficulty.

"The *Glamis Castle* was burnt two days ago in the night. We have been drifting about since then without food or water. Oh, thank God for this! thank God for this — and to meet *you!*"

"Bear a hand, my lads, bear a hand," shouted

Hardy, whilst the captain with his head showing above the rail stood staring into the boat. The mate would not tax her with speech; she might be dying! Some alert seamen were in that clipper, and to the instincts and humanity of a British sailor no form of distress appeals more vehemently than the open boat in which they see no breaker, than the open boat in which men and women may be dying of thirst. Swiftly, as though the crew of the *York* were the disciplined and gallant hearts of the battle-ship, a chair, well secured, sank from the yard-arm and was seized by Hardy. He lifted the girl on to it, took a turn round her with a piece of line which had come down with it, and she soared from his nimble, skilful hands, and vanished from his sight behind the bulwarks. He gained the deck in a few instants, and was at the girl's side before the sailors could liberate her from the chair.

"She is a dear friend of mine," said he, loudly, that the men might understand that more was in this thrilling passage than humanity only. And passing his arm round her waist to support her he helped her to walk aft.

The captain's face looked dark with disappointment, and as Hardy drew close to him he heard him mutter, "They have not brought him, they have not brought him!"

"I will take this lady below, sir," said Hardy, speaking rapidly. "Her ship has been burnt. They have been without food and water for two or three days," and he passed on with the girl to the companion-hatch, whilst the captain stood dumbly following them with his eyes, with the noble Newfoundland standing beside him.

In silence the two descended the cabin ladder, and with the tenderness of a lover, which in such men as Hardy has the sweetness of a woman's love, he placed her upon a locker and poured out a little water. She drank with the passion of thirst, and asked for more with her eyes, but Hardy knew better and gave her a biscuit, which would lightly soothe the craving of the hunger that is often felt after thirst is assuaged. She bit a little piece of biscuit, and said:

"Won't you give me a little more water?"

"Very soon. Eat that biscuit."

He stepped to the pantry where some brandy was kept, and poured a tablespoonful in a wine-glass, and this filled up with water he gave her after she had eaten the biscuit. The stimulant helped her, and even as he stood watching her with his heart beating fast with this wonder, this miracle, of almost unparalleled meeting, he witnessed symptoms of a reviving spirit, of a reanimated body in her face.

At this moment Captain Layard came down the companion-steps and approached them with an eager, strained expression. His eyes, alight with mania — for madness has its expectations and disappointments — rested with a searching gaze upon the girl.

"Have you seen him?" he asked.

"No, sir," answered Hardy, quickly trying to catch Julia's eye, but she was staring with alarm at the captain, as you would, or I, under such conditions of inexplicable confrontment. "She is a dear friend of mine and is ill with the sufferings of an open boat, but her presence in this ship may mean more than we can dream of now."

The captain's face changed, his eyes took a fresh *illumination* with his smile.

"See to her, Mr. Hardy, see to her, and I'll start the ship afresh."

He left the cabin.

"May I have another biscuit?" said Julia.

Hardy handed one and smiled, for he saw again the sweet unconscious cock of her head, not the less fascinating to him because her eyes were dim, her cheeks a little hollow, her lips pale.

"Was that the captain?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered.

"What was he asking? Is he right in his mind?"

"His only son, a little boy, a beautiful bright-haired little boy, fell overboard and was drowned, and — But we will talk about the captain and your adventures when you are stronger."

He mused a moment or two, and then added, "You will take the rest you need in my cabin, and a berth shall be made ready for you. A good long sleep will restore you. So come."

He put his arm through hers and caused her to rise, and indeed she still needed the support he gave her. He took her to his cabin, and as she walked she looked about her with growing animation, which is a cheering sign, and once she exclaimed, "Thank God, I am safe! Thank God, I have met you! But how wonderful — oh, how wonderful!"

She sat on his sea-chest whilst he smoothed and prepared the bunk. It was a little cabin; the bunk was under a port-hole, and plenty of light came flashing in off the trembling, feathering sea. You might hear the tramp of feet overhead, and the thump of coils of rope flung off their pins. There were none of the garnishings which often make pathetic such interiors as this; when a young officer hangs up the picture of his wife with their first baby

on her knee, neither of them to be kissed and clasped for months and months, even if God be merciful to the poor fellow and his ship; no rack full of pipes, no odds and ends of curios — in short, nothing ornamented the wall of Hardy's sea-bedroom but a long chart of the English Channel, which it was his custom to study when he lay in his bunk smoking, to get absolutely by heart the lights which gem the coast of our island, and the verdure-crowned terraces over the way.

When the bunk was prepared he removed her hat and gave her a hair-brush, and took down a little square of mirror and held it up before her. He greatly admired the beauty and the abundance of her hair, which was parted on one side.

"Nothing so refreshes one as to brush one's hair," said he.

"How ill I look," she exclaimed. "How could you have recognised me so instantly?" and she lifted her eyes, full of caress, to his face.

"Will you be strong enough to get into that bunk unhelped?" he asked.

It was a low-seated bunk, and she looked at it and answered, "Yes."

"Then I will leave you," said he, and he walked out hurriedly, and shut the door behind him.

He went on deck to see how the captain was dealing with his ship and found the vessel sailing along, with her yards properly swung and everything right. The boat from which the people had been received was visible at the tail of the ship's wake. The captain had sent her adrift, which was sane or not in him, just as you think proper. The sailors were coiling down and otherwise busy; the four men had been

taken into the forecastle, where they were eating and drinking and yarning to a few of the watch below about the burning of the Indiaman *Glamis Castle*. The moment Captain Layard saw Hardy he called him.

"Who is the lady?" he asked.

"Miss Julia Armstrong, the daughter of a retired commander in the Royal Navy," was the reply.

"Where have you lodged her?"

"In my cabin for the present, sir, till I receive your orders to get another one ready for her."

"Oh, yes, have that done — have that done," the captain said in a smooth, perfectly sane voice. "Do you know what she was aboard the ship?"

Now Hardy was like the squire in Dickens's exquisite sketch — "he would not tell a lie for no man!" At the same time he did not wish Captain Layard should know that Miss Armstrong had shipped as a second stewardess, so he replied she was going to Calcutta with a letter of introduction to the bishop of that place. Her father was poor, and the girl wanted to find something to do in India.

But the captain was dreaming. One with eyes for such faces as his could easily see that he was thinking of something else, or did not understand. He continued to look in silence for a little while at Hardy, and then the baleful sparkle suddenly brightened his stare, he folded his arms and said, with an expression of triumphant hope and convicition:

"She is fresh from the sea and knows where Johnny is, and she shall help me to find him!"

CHAPTER X.

THE CAPTAIN AND THE GIRL

It was six o'clock on the same day in which Julia Armstrong had been delivered from that horrible sea tragedy, the open boat, by the miraculous apparition of the *York,* of all the ships which the horizons of the deep were then girdling! The chief mate knocked upon the door of his cabin where the girl lay, and believing he heard her say "Come in," entered, and found her asleep.

The reddening sunshine was away to starboard, but the heavens southeast were glowing, and the girl slept, visible to the eye as the circle of blue porthole up which and down which you saw the clear-cut line of the horizon sliding like a piece of clockwork. He stood looking at her, for there was love for this girl in the man's heart, and this encounter was so wonderful that he witnessed the hand of God in it, and a sentiment of religion sanctified his emotion; otherwise, with the sailor's respect for the repose of those who sleep — for the seamen's best blessing upon you is, *Lord grant you a good night's rest, sir!* — he would have softly stepped out and left her.

And this he would have soon done, but as he looked she all at once opened her gray eyes full upon him, stared a few moments till intelligence came to her, then started, smiled, and sat up in the bunk.

"I've awaked you, I'm afraid," said Hardy.

"I'm glad you have. I have slept sweetly and I feel well," she answered. "Strange that I have not dreamt at all, for I have passed through a nightmare since the burning of the ship. How marvellous to see you standing there!"

"Could you eat a piece of cold fowl and drink some wine?"

"Yes."

"You shall sup here, for I want to hear your story. If you are in the cabin, and the captain comes —"

He put his head out of the door and hailed the cabin servant, who was polishing glasses in the pantry. He told him what to get and bring, and he then caused the girl to get out of her bunk, and cushioned his sea-chest with his bunk pillow as a seat for her. He smiled as he saw her fall into the incomparable posture (as he thought it): the head a little on one side, the hands on the hips, the feet crossed, the whole figure beautiful now that her jacket was removed, though her dark blue blouse imperfectly suggested the faultless grace of her breast. Sleep had faintly tinged her cheek whereon the shadow of suffering had lain; her eyes had brightened, her lips had reddened, and all the romance of her face, which was not beautiful nor even pretty, but alluring, nevertheless, was expressed once more in the flattering evening light, which suffused with a liquid softness the atmosphere of that little cabin.

Until the man knocked at the door with the tray of food and wine, they talked chiefly of home, of the dry ditch and Bax's farm, of the East India

Dock road and of Captain Smedley, whose escape and probable safety the girl had mentioned early in this talk. And then whilst she supped — an early supper, but on the ocean it is the last meal — she told him the story of a memorable fire at sea.

There had been many such fires, and they nearly all read like one. It begins by some rascally sailor broaching a rum cask; or it is a naked candle in the hand of a fool looking for a brand in the lazarette; or it is a pipeful of glowing tobacco amongst wool; the capsizal of a lamp; or it is caused by something which the ocean sucks down to her ooze and buries there, one secret more. But however it be, the end is nearly always the same. It was so in this case; the fire took such a hold there was no dealing with it; a score may have perished. The girl saw the bowsprit and jib-booms black with figures of men who had been cut off by the amidship furnace. Numbers — for she was a full ship with many children, and besides passengers she was carrying hard upon a hundred soldiers in her 'tween-decks — numbers, I say, got away in the boats, and amongst them, the last to leave, was the captain; she did not doubt that. She fell overboard in her terror, and in her recoil right aft from the smoke and its burning stars, and afterwards found herself in a boat in the company of five men, one of whom, groaning heavily with internal injury, died in the night and was dropped over the boat's side.

She had more to tell him about this shipwreck, but that fire concerns my story only in so far as it brings this girl again on to the stage by one of those dramatic and startling methods adopted by the ocean, whose moods are many.

"If your captain is a madman," she said, "what is to happen to this ship?"

He put his finger to his lips in a gesture of caution and reticence.

"We may whisper it to each other," said he, in a low voice, "but the crew have no knowledge of it, or they may attribute any strangeness in his manner to the loss of his child, and think it passing. They all loved the poor little fellow, and so did I."

And he told her how the boy used to beat his drum in accompaniment to the sailor's whistle, and related the story of his falling overboard and the efforts to save him, and the captain's frantic dumb-show and sudden exhibition of insanity, so that he believed his child was merely missing, and that something would happen to tell him where he might be found.

"How sad!" said the girl. "It would have broken my heart to see it. And does he still think that he will find his little boy?"

"I'm afraid it's his conviction, the subtle delusion of the diseased brain," Hardy answered; "but in other matters with him it's like writing on sand; next tide all's gone. Do not tell him you were a stewardess. Converse with him as though he were perfectly sane. He is a gentleman and an educated man. Humour his sorrowful fancy, for it can hurt no one, and it keeps the poor fellow's heart up."

"I suppose you are really in charge of the ship?" she said.

"I am watching her navigation," he answered, "but I tell you I am at a dead loss because he is the supreme law-giver of the vessel, and what he orders must be done or it is mutiny. His orders

may be dangerous to my judgment, but not to the men's, who take the course as it's given; and I dare not go amongst them and speak the truth. He might get better and hear of it, and it would be in his power to ruin me."

She sank her head thoughtfully, understanding him. The door was rapped.

"Hullo," cried Hardy.

It was the cabin servant who had come to tell Hardy that the captain wished to see the lady.

"Where is he?" inquired the mate.

"On deck, sir. He'll come below when I report her ready to receive him."

"Report her ready," said Hardy, and he and the girl went into the cabin.

She seated herself on a cushioned locker, and he stood beside her.

"That's your berth," said he, pointing to a door.

Gratitude and love were in the smile she gave him. The red western blaze was on the skylight, and reposed on her hair like gold-dust. It was Hardy's watch below — he was therefore at liberty to be in the cabin. He caught sight of Candy staring through the skylight, but the pale-eyed man walked off in a minute, and then the captain came down.

He bowed with the courtesy of breeding to the girl. Tradition has scored so heavily against the merchant shipmaster by virtue of romantic invention, which largely consists of lies, that I dare say it is impossible for a landsman to believe that the commander of a merchant-ship could be anything but a rough, grog-seamed, hoarse-voiced salt, without grammar for his log-book. The lie stands as everlasting as the pyramids, and for my part it may

go on standing, but it is a lie all the same, and it is my pleasure to paint the truth.

As the girl returned the bow she saw the great Newfoundland in the captain's wake, and cried out with a sudden passion of admiration, "Oh, what a magnificent creature!" The dog made friends with her in an instant, and by twenty canine tokens expressed delight in the caress of her hand. No doubt the beautiful and faithful creature appreciated the sweetening and civilising influence of the lady in that cabin.

The captain began by putting several sane questions, and she remembered that she was not to tell him that she had shipped as an under-stewardess in the *Glamis Castle*. He knew the vessel, and listened with a degree of attention, that excited Hardy's surprise, to her narrative of the fire. He seemed to take a fancy to her, to be pleased by her presence, and said he hoped she would be comfortable on board his ship. In the midst of his rational talk he slapped his forehead and kept his hand pressed to it, and his face changed; a look of grief that made him almost haggard was visible when he dropped his hand and gazed at the girl.

"I miss my son — my little son," he exclaimed, "and I am waiting for something" — he added, in a broken voice — "to tell me where I can find him. His drum is by his bed — come and look at it."

Awed by the sudden confrontment of hopeless human grief, the girl rose and followed him, with a glance at Hardy as for courage. The heave of the deck was gentle; she was stronger, and stepped without difficulty. The captain entered his cabin

and closed the door upon them both, which frightened her, for she easily now saw how it was with his poor brain, and no one in the company of a madman can ever dare swear that in the next minute he will continue harmless.

"That is his drum," said the captain. "That is the little bed he slept in."

Hardy outside stood close at the door, listening and prepared.

"He is my only child," continued the captain, compelling by his own gaze the girl's attention to a little coat and a little cap, and other garments of the boy which were hanging upon the bulkhead. "His mother is dead, and she was my first and my only love. I miss him of a night, and want him. He has been my constant companion in several voyages, and the life of the captain of a ship at sea is lonely, and I miss him. It was my delight to dress him and to listen to his talk. Oh, he is a clever boy! He can ask questions which the greatest mind could not answer."

He sat down on a chair by the table on which were instruments of navigation, a few books, pen and ink, and the like, and folding his arms and bowing his head he sobbed dryly without concealment of features, and the piteous face, bearded, the half-closed eyes, the long hair under the cap which he had not removed, made the girl feel sick and faint, as though to some oppressive stroke of personal grief.

She rallied, for she was a young woman of great spirit, as I have a right to hold, and remembering what Hardy had said, she exclaimed, softly:

"You will find him, Captain Layard."

At this he looked up at her, started to his feet, and his face was eager and impassioned with emotion not communicable, for who can expound the workings of the diseased mind?

"Tell me," he cried, and she saw what Hardy had also seen — the baleful sparkle of mania in his eyes, "you're fresh from the sea, and God may have sent you to me. Tell me!"

She could not speak. Her consolatory phrase had exhausted imagination, and her heart refused its sanction to the mate's humane idea, that it was good to keep up the poor fellow's spirits.

"Tell me!" he repeated, and he advanced a step and his eyes devoured her face.

"God will comfort you and help you," she replied, not knowing what to say.

He sighed, and turning his head fastened his eyes upon the little bed, then looked at her again, this time with his painful expression of superiority, the air of a man whose soul is exalted by contemplation of something of heavenly importance divulged to him and to him only, and wearing this face, he opened the door and she passed out, which was lucky for Hardy, because had the captain gone first he would have found the mate standing close and listening.

The captain remained in his cabin. The others stood by the table, and the western light, rich and red as a deep-bosomed rose, flowed down upon them through the open skylight.

"Poor man! Poor man!" the girl exclaimed. "I fear that what I've said will create a delusion; he will think I know where his child is."

"His moods are like the dog-vane," said Hardy. "*I could not* hear what passed."

She told him. He frowned with the puzzle of his mind.

"You can judge now for yourself," said he. "Is it right that a man like this should command a ship whose safety became doubly precious to me this morning?"

She smiled gently, but gravity quickly returned; she could not but reflect his face of worry and uncertainty. The great dog was lying at his master's door, and all was silent in the captain's cabin. This, in the pause, made her say:

"He may commit suicide."

"Not whilst he believes his son is alive and to be found," answered Hardy.

He walked to the door of her berth, opened it, and she saw that it was as comfortably equipped as the ship would allow.

"You shall have a hair-brush and whatever else I possess to give you," said he. "But how about clothes? I can't dress you."

"I am saved," she answered, "and that is enough to think of at present."

This was a spirited answer for a girl who was talking to the man she loved, for would not any girl, addressing the man of her heart, grow pensive to the thought that she had but one gown to wear in the whole world?

He felt a certain sense of independency owing to the captain's state, and considered that he was entitled to act beyond his rights as a mate. By which I mean that it could not much concern him if the captain came out and found him talking to the girl, and generally acting as though he were a passenger instead of an officer of the ship.

"Come on deck," said he, "the air will refresh you."

And they went up the companion-steps, whilst the Newfoundland continued to sentinel the captain's door.

A glorious evening sky, in the west like a city on fire, clouds with brows glowing into scarlet as they sailed into the splendour abeam, the ship leaning with the breeze, and the white spume twinkling on the eastern blue in a trembling heaven-full of the lights of foam. Two sail were in sight, fairy gleams upon the lens-like edge on the port bow.

"Oh," cried the girl, with a swift look along the deck, "after an open boat! and one man groaning and then lying dead in her!"

They walked slowly to and fro to leeward, leaving Mr. Candy, who ogled them betwixt his white eyelashes, to pace the weather quarter-deck in the loneliness of command. The sailors had immediately seen how things stood. Nothing that happens at sea astonishes a sailor, unless it is the expected, which is often a real surprise, so full of disappointments, of leeway, head winds, misreckoning is the life. Here was the chief mate who had fallen in with a girl whom he knew.

"They might have kept company ashore," says Bill to Jim. "She was bound one way and he another. Ain't that sailor fashion?"

"Ain't she got a figure?" says Jim to Bill. "Wouldn't I like to put my arm round her waist if Dick and the little 'un was playing. It's damned hard on us sailor men that no female society's allowed aboard a ship."

"There's the figurehead if it's female," says Bill.

"I've known a man so 'ard up that of a dog-watch, when there was plenty o' light, he'd slide down the dolphin-striker just to talk to the woman on the stem-head. He'd say it was the next best thing."

Perhaps it was, for some figureheads in those days were a little gorgeous. I have seen ladies under the bowsprit with long black hair and swelling bosoms, bright with golden stars. Their blush was deep, their lips scarlet, their smile alluring, they were always curtseying, and the sea in its loving humours flung snow-white nosegays at them.

But the shadow of the boy's death was still upon the ship, and so far the captain had treated his men *as* men, and they were sorry for him. You may take it that a man is no sailor who ill-treats a sailor, and despite tradition and the presence of the sea-lawyer, your ship's company, if they are British, will serve you honestly if their food is fit even for sailors, and if they are numerous enough to do the work of one man and half a man added per head, as against the one-man work which the shore exacts without expecting more.

As Hardy and the girl walked the deck, whilst the ship sailed along stately in the beautiful light of that evening, they talked again of home and then of the country to which they were voyaging. The sail upon the port bow leaned like tiny jets of red flame, and no star of heaven could have filled the liquid distance with more grace.

"It was certainly your destiny to make for Australia," said Hardy, "and I now say what I thought from the beginning, that your chances lie there. But we had to find you a berth."

"Captain Smedley was very kind to me," she

answered. "He would sometimes invite me into his cabin and talk to me as pleasantly as though he had known me all his life. He gave me an introduction to the Bishop of Calcutta, and begged him to do everything that could be done for a girl placed as I am. I believe he talked to the passengers about me, for some were extremely good-natured and sympathetic, and would apologise for troubling me if I waited upon them."

"Any griffs aboard?" asked Hardy.

"Some young officers," she answered, with a half smile upon her lips, and looking down upon the deck, "but I kept as much to myself as I could."

"You'll find plenty of opportunities in Australia," said Hardy. "There are rich squatters in that country, and you can be driving about Melbourne and entertaining and doing what you pleased whilst he was a thousand miles off counting his sheep."

"Suppose all the rich squatters kept themselves a thousand miles distant whilst I was in Melbourne, could I return in this ship?"

She asked this question placidly, but her expression showed that she did not appreciate this reference to the squatters.

"You want position and you'll get it."

"Could I return in this ship?"

"We'll see," he answered, smiling at her. "A dinner and champagne to the head of the firm of agents might help us, and nature did not intend that you should ever plead in vain."

As he said this the captain came on deck, followed by Sailor. The Newfoundland, with the critical eye of an old salt, took a view of the horizon, and in a minute rushed forward on to the forecastle and re-

ported two ships in sight on the port bow by a number of barks, which made the men, who were lounging about the knight-heads, laugh heartily. On seeing the captain, the mate touched his cap and walked right aft on the lee-side, where with folded arms he seemed to watch the sea, though he kept the captain and Julia in the corner of his eye.

The poor man approached the girl, who received him with a smile.

"Has Mr. Hardy looked after you?" he said, kindly and gently.

"Oh, yes, Captain Layard, I am very happy and comfortable, and thank you over and over again for your goodness. I believe I should have died by this time in that open boat, and I owe my life to you and this noble ship."

"I am very dull and lonely," he said in a musing way, clearly inattentive to her words. "Those ships yonder break the continuity of this everlasting circle, but they'll vanish shortly, and the full desolation of the night will encompass us. It is the night that I fear — it is the night that I fear!" he continued, almost whispering, and gazing at her as a man looks at another whose pity and help his heart is yearning for. "I miss him! If I dream of him I shall go mad to find it a dream. But you know where he is."

She hoped to divert his thoughts, and said: "I do not find the sea desolate, Captain Layard. On fine nights I could stand for hours looking at the stars; and is desolation on the sea when the sun is shining? If I were a man I would be a sailor, for, although it has nearly destroyed me, I have learnt to love the ocean."

She looked toward Hardy. The dog, having barked his report of two sail in sight, came trotting aft, and stood beside his master. The captain looked at him a little while in silence, his brow contracted in meditation.

"Which is real?" he asked, placing his foot upon the dog's shadow, "this or this?" and he put his hand upon the dog.

Julia, who found a necessity to humour him, answered:

"Some great thinker has written, 'Shadows we are, and shadows we pursue.'"

"How long grows one's shadow in the dying sun!" said Captain Layard, turning his face — filled with the yearning of grief and charged with that subtle expression of madness for which no words are to be found — toward the burning sky; "and soon we are nothing but shadows. Do you believe in God?" He looked at her suddenly with an extraordinary gaze of passionate anxiety.

"Oh, yes, Captain Layard," replied the girl. "I believe in him now if ever I did, and I have thanked him."

His face put on its triumphant look, but he was interrupted in the irrelevant sentiments he was about to deliver by the approach of the boatswain.

Julia crossed the deck to Hardy, glad to escape the pain of such talk.

"What is it?" said the captain.

"The men we picked up," answered the boatswain, "have asked me to come aft to say they're willing to serve as seamen aboard this ship."

"You are a full company," replied the captain quickly. "I can't afford to pay and keep more sailors."

"They're likely men, sir," said the boatswain, speaking in a softened note of respectful compassion.

"They'll expect their wages."

The boatswain answered he thought that was likely.

"No," said the captain, "we'll transship them, and send them home."

He rounded on his heel, and sat upon the skylight, and gazed at the dying lights in the west. What could be more sane than this man's answers to the boatswain? Hardy had overheard them, and perplexity was deepened in him. Who was going to convince the sailors that their captain was mad unless he talked to them as he did to him and Julia? And the captain sat looking at the dimming glory, and did not seem to remember that he had been conversing with the girl, or to know that she had left him.

It was fine weather throughout that night, and the moon shone, and the heaven of stars swarmed in sparkling hosts toward the grave of the sun until the pallor of the dawn, like the face of the risen Christ, put out those fires of the dark; the ship, bathed in the ice-white radiance, stole phantom-like over the boundless cemetery of the drowned, the perished sailors whose tombstones were in every breaking surge. All had been quiet aboard that stealing ship, clad to her trucks in the raiment of her day. The captain would pass a long time in his cabin, then appear on deck, and walk it for a little space self-engrossed; and it seemed to Hardy when his watch came round, and when the captain showed himself, that the man's isolation and silence ex-

pressed, perhaps, a still dim but growing perception of the fate of his little boy, in which case the delusion would leave him, and his mind recover at least the strength it possessed when they made sail in the English Channel.

When the sun rose the ocean rolled in mackerel-tinted mounds, and the ship swayed as she floated onwards at about five knots. Stu'nsails had been set by order of the captain when he came on deck at dawn, and, whitening the air on high, the swelling cloths carried the sight to the heavens, which arched in a miracle of motionless feathers of cloud, a glorious canopy of delicate plumes, in sweet keeping with the airy graces of the queenly fabric which proudly bowed upon its mighty throne.

A sail was in sight on the starboard bow, and in two hours she would be abreast. The Newfoundland, coming on deck with the captain when the light broke, instantly barked its report of her, and now, a little after eight, Hardy was viewing her through the ship's telescope; for the sane instructions which had reached him were, that the four men were to be transferred to the first ship which would receive them.

The four men were on the forecastle watching the coming vessel; they were good specimens of the English seaman of those days, sturdy and whiskered, bronzed in face and bowed in back, with that steady air which made you know that, like most British sailors, they were to be trusted beyond all breeds of foreign mariners in the hour of sea peril, when the ship was grinding out her heart upon the rocks, when the belching hatches were blackening the air into a storm cloud, when the blow of the

stranger's bows had riven the side into a gulf, when the yawn of the started butt was burdening the hold with tons of ship-drowning brine.

When the ships were abreast, the stranger proved American, bound for the River Thames. The beautiful flag of her great country shook its barred folds at the peak, and you thought of Bishop's Berkeley's prophetic line, "Westward the course of empire takes its way." Her yellow sheathing flashed in artillery spoutings as she rolled from the sun, her canvas with cotton was as white as milk, she was a wonder of sea architecture, the creation of a people whose sires had launched that exquisite structure, the Baltimore clipper.

Captain Layard was now on deck, and Hardy must discover that in matters of routine he was not going to work with the diseased half of his head. He hailed the American captain, and they exchanged the information they asked.

"What ship is that? Where are you from, and where are you bound to?"

And the American wanted to know the Greenwich time by the chronometers in Captain Layard's cabin.

Then was shouted across in words as sane as ever sounded from a quarter-deck the news of the recovery of four men from an open boat, and would the American captain carry them home? Of course he would, and within half an hour from the beginning of this rencounter the two ships had started on their separate courses with colours dipping in cordial good-byes — the seaman's hand-shake. And these were cousins.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CAPTAIN'S BIRTHDAY

Now in this business of transferring the four men Hardy noticed that the captain made no reference to Miss Armstrong. Another captain would have asked her if she wished to go home: perhaps, indeed, would have sent her home without asking her. Was it because Captain Layard knew she had no home? Hardy hoped it might be that, but suspected it was not so. This ship wanted no stewardess; the girl was one more to feed, and owners do not love liberality in their captains. In short, the mate came to the conclusion that the captain's benevolence in keeping the girl and giving her a passage to Australia for nothing was due to hallucination, and the thought was uneasiness itself both for Julia's sake and the ship's.

It was the day following the transshipment of the men that he found an opportunity during the captain's absence to take a turn with the girl and talk to her. The sun was shining a little hotly, and the clouds were sailing fast. Each round of swell, as it came under-running the ship out of the northeast, was ridged and wrinkled with arches of foam, and the day was alive with the music in the rigging, with

the speckled wings of sea-birds in the wake, and the smoke-like shadow of vapour floating through the sunshine on the water.

After the couple had talked a little, Hardy said:

"How does the captain treat you?"

"Very kindly," she answered.

"I keep an eye upon him," he said, "but it will not do to seem to hang near when he is talking to you. He might round and become fierce, for from madness you may expect anything. What is his talk about?"

"Chiefly his lost child."

A seaman who was in the main-rigging putting a fresh seizing to a ratline looked at the girl, and thought deep in himself, Oh, lovey, what a figure! But what that whiskered heart admired most was the coquettish cock of her head, the grace of one hand upon her hip, the charm of her motions as she walked, her posture when she turned aft or forward on the return that was like a pause in some sweet dancer's movements. Yes, Jack can keep a bright lookout when a girl heaves in sight, but the mighty Charles Dickens is right in holding that Jack's Nan is often the unloveliest of the fair.

"Does he go on thinking that you know where his child is?" said Hardy.

"Yes. It is a fixed delusion, though I cannot humour it — it is too sad — in spite of your wish."

"The oddest part to me," said Hardy, "is the reason he shows in his professional work. He doesn't confound things; the sail he talks of is the sail it is; he still knows the ropes. The flicker of the leach of a topgallantsail will set him wanting a small pull on the leebrace."

"How does he manage with the navigation?" asked the girl.

"He works it out as I do. He finds the ship's position to a second. This may be the effect of habit, but is not custom beaten into rags by insanity, like the head of an old drum? It's not so in this case, and the crew mayn't find him out till the pilot boards us, and guess nothing until they hear that the doctors have locked him up."

"Then what does his madness signify?" said the girl. "He'll be as good as the sanest if we arrive safely."

"Ah, but it's the getting there! It's the what may happen to-morrow, or to-morrow, or to-morrow, and that is going to make my hair gray, Miss Armstrong."

"Call me Julia," she said, looking at him with a sudden light in her eyes.

"Why should I take that liberty?" he replied, smiling.

"Because I should love it," she answered.

"I'll not call you Julia before him," he exclaimed, with a note of fondness which brought a charming expression into her face, as the kisses of a shower freshen the perfume of the rose. "It must be a stiff Miss Armstrong or I am no mate," and then they fell to talking a little nonsense.

A day came, and it was the fifth day dating from the drowning of the little drummer, and it was a Friday, in all tradition a black day for the sailor; and nobody, I think, has taken notice that it was Friday when Nelson, full of instinctive assurance that he would never return alive, kissed his sleeping child and started to join his ship for Trafalgar.

The captain, Miss Armstrong, and Mr. Hardy sat at breakfast. The ship had made good way; not many parallels lay between her and the northern verge of the tropics. The sun poured his light in fire, and the flying-fish sparkled under the bows.

The sailors had noticed nothing in the captain to set them growling suspicion into one another's ears with askant looks aft. If Mr. Candy, who lived close to the skipper, had taken any sort of altitude of the poor man's mind, he kept his observation secret; or it might be that he believed the captain was a little upset by the loss of his child, and he had not the penetrating sagacity of Hardy.

The wind had fallen light, and the motions of the ship were as easy as a swimmer's. Hardy had noticed in the captain's face when they met that morning an expression of lofty triumph, of sublimated self-complacency such as a man deranged by conquest and acclamation might wear as he passes slowly through the huzzaing crowds. He seemed self-crowned, and might have reminded a better student than Hardy of one of Nat Lee's heaven-defying stage-kings.

"To-day is Friday," said the captain, addressing Miss Armstrong, "and what day do you think it is?"

Julia thought awhile, for she fancied he meant something in the almanac.

"I don't know, captain," she answered.

"It is my birthday," said the captain, "and Johnny is waiting somewhere to kiss me."

Hardy was about to deliver with all the respect of a mate a sentence of congratulation, but the closing words of the captain silenced him.

"I wish you many happy returns of the day," said Julia.

"You might like to know how old I am," said the captain, with an indescribable look at the girl, "but every man should respect the secret of his birth. Until we come to sixty we like to be thought much younger, and when we come to eighty we tell lies that our friends may think us ninety. I have good reason to congratulate myself upon my birthday. I cannot believe that the Red Ensign ever floated over a better seaman than I, a man who is both a gentleman and a sailor, and it has been my privilege," he continued, talking as though he was making an after-dinner speech, "to have dignified by my behaviour and breeding a service that in public opinion is in want of dignity."

Hardy burst into a laugh; he could not help it, but he instantly apologised by saying that the captain's words made him think of the first skipper he sailed with, betwixt whose legs, as he stood, you could have fitted an oval picture, and whose face for beauty might have been picked out of the harness cask.

The captain with a slight frown cast his eyes upon the mate, and said, "Johnny shall be a sailor. His mother would have desired him to serve the queen at sea, but he shall perpetuate *me* under the flag I serve."

This was followed by a short silence; the others found nothing to say. It was perhaps one of the saddest illustrations of madness on record, and it set the listeners' hearts pining to do something that was denied to their sympathy and distress.

"The men shall have a holiday," said the captain,

who was scarcely eating. "It is my birthday, and they shall drink my health at eight bells. You will drink my health, Mr. Hardy, and you, Miss Armstrong?"

They answered that they would drink his health with the greatest pleasure.

"You and Mr. Candy in rum, Mr. Hardy; you'll drink with the men, for I like the officers of my ship to be associated with the crew on festive occasions."

"I will gladly drink with the men, sir," responded Hardy.

"Rum is not a fit drink for young ladies," continued the captain, with a faint smile, "and you, Miss Armstrong, will drink my health in claret — a wine which shall not hurt you, because 'tis light and old and nourishing."

Julia bowed. Hardy was wondering what the men would think, but if they thought this unusual deviation from sea routine odd, they would certainly like it and hope for more. It was an exhibition of insane generosity, of lunatic kindness, and the mate could see nothing else in it.

In obedience to the captain's instructions he went on deck, sending Candy below to his breakfast, and called the boatswain aft.

"It's the captain's orders," said he, "that the men shall knock off work all day."

The boatswain stared. "All day, sir?" he said.

"It's his birthday," answered Hardy. "And all hands will drink his health in good Jamaica rum at eight bells, served out on the capstan head."

Innumerable wrinkles overran the boatswain's face as grin after grin rippled about his gale-hardened skin. He looked as if he would like to say that

here was a traverse that beat all his going a-fishing. But the immense pleasure that beamed in his expression was full assurance of the reception the crew would give the news.

He walked slowly forward, and the men wondered at his deep and constant grin. "One of the mate's stories, I reckon," thought Bill, and Jim also thought that some joke of the mate had started the boatswain on that smile. When he reached the forecastle the boatswain put his silver whistle to his lips and blew the shrill music of "All hands!" and a hundred little birds of the groves and woods seemed to be perched in song upon the yards and rigging.

The fellows who were below came tumbling up, startled by that call in fine weather. In a very little time the whole of the crew had gathered round their forecastle leader, who, after clearing his throat and gazing about him with his profound smile, said:

"Lads, it's the capt'n's birthday, and it's to be a holiday for you all right away through, with liquor at noon to drink his health in."

Sailors are usually so badly treated by all variety of shipowners' sullen deafness to their grievances, that when on rare occasions, sometimes originating in madness, they are well treated, their astonishment is a phenomenon of emotion. It seems unnatural, they think. A beautiful mermaid with a gilded tail and flowing hair of bronze, with her white revealed charms made entrancing by the soft blue of the water, could not amaze them more than a skipper's kindness taking the form of Layard's.

A brief spell of silence fell upon them as they looked at one another and at the boatswain.

"Ain't yer coddin' us?" said a man.

"Fill your pipes, and go a-courting," answered the boatswain. "I'm for taking advantage of it when it comes, which ain't ever too soon or often."

This convinced the crew, who delivered a loud cheer, and then began to talk and scatter, all of them feeling a bit aimless, for it wasn't like going ashore.

Hardy, who was keeping the deck whilst Candy breakfasted, watched the proceedings on the forecastle, and wondered if this stroke of the captain was going to give them any idea of the truth. But why should it? If they suspected, through this act of kindness, that the boy's loss had shifted the "old man's" ballast, they would only hope that a long time would pass before his mental cargo was trimmed afresh. But in truth they did not know that their captain was insane, and even Candy, who was below sitting at the table and listening to the skipper conversing with Miss Armstrong, would not have kissed the Book upon it.

Presently Mr. Candy came on deck, but Hardy, whose watch below it was, thought he would stay a little and talk to Miss Armstrong, and observe the captain if he should appear. Very soon after Mr. Candy arrived Julia rose lightly through the companion-hatch. She was now looking quite well, better indeed than she looked when Hardy first met her. Again he found himself admiring her faultless figure and the pose of her head, enchanting through its unconsciousness.

"Where is the captain?" he asked her.

"I left him at the table," she replied. "He was not in the cabin when I came out of my berth."

"I hope it won't end in his destroying himself,"

exclaimed Hardy. "There is a great deal of goodness and humanity in the poor fellow's heart, and it's dreadful to see a man struggling to conquer his brain's disease. Who can tell what passes in the minds of such people? But what am I to do? He is Prime Minister aboard this ship, and those are the people," said he, nodding toward the crew, "who must turn him out."

"Have you told them they are to have a holiday?" she asked.

"Don't they look like it?" he replied.

"How'll they spend it?" she inquired.

"In loafing and smoking and sleeping. If the captain's liberal with his grog — Well, the drummer's gone out of their heads — 'tis the way of the sea: a bubble over the side, a broken pipe in a vacant bunk, and the ship sails on. They may dance and sing songs; and I hope they will, for God knows the captain is depressing enough, and I like to see the hornpipe danced."

Meanwhile where was Captain Layard? He was in his cabin seated close to the medicine-chest, which stood open, and reading a thin volume all about poisons, and the quantities to be administered when given for sickness. His great dog lay beside him. He read with a knitted brow, and sometimes sank the volume to lift with his right hand some bottle of poison out of its little square place. He would look at it and then refer to the book.

In this singular study, fearful with the menace of the light in his eyes, tragically portentous with the lifting look of triumph and the insane smile, he spent about half an hour, and then closing the lid of the medicine-chest, he stood up and looked at the drum,

and softly wrung his hands with a heart-moving expression, whose appeal lay in the soul's perception seeking to pierce in vain the torturing and bewildering veil of disease; for it is not the immortal soul of man which is mad in madness, and this belief is God-sent; the soil buries and resolves to ashes the mania that destroys, and the purified soul is liberated to await the judgment of God — its Home.

After a few minutes he stepped into the cabin and called the attendant, who was handling crockery and glasses in the pantry. The fellow stepped out.

"Jump below into the lazarette," said the captain, "and draw a bucket of rum. I want plenty. This is my birthday, and all hands will drink my health."

The man was not at all astonished; he had got the news from the forecastle. He was a sort of steward, and knew the ropes in the lazarette. The little hatch was just abaft the captain's chair, and was opened by an iron ring. The man accepted the captain's orders literally, disappeared, and returned with a clean, big bucket.

The lazarette is an after-hold, a compartment of a ship in which in those times all sorts of commodities used to be stowed, chiefly edible, and for cabin use. The man lifted the hatch-cover — the hatch was no more than a man-hole — and by help of the light, which shone down upon a cask that was almost immediately under, pumped the bucket nearly full.

The captain went to the hatch and looked down, and exclaimed:

"Hand it up; I'll help you." He received the bucket and placed it on the deck, and the man sprang through the hatch and replaced the cover.

"Take it into my cabin," said the captain, "and bring it on deck when I send you for it."

And this was done, and the man went on deck whilst the captain entered his berth and closed the door.

"I have drawed enough to swim ye," said the cabin-attendant to Bill.

"'Tain't like being in port, though," answered Bill, whilst Jim and several others like him grinned at the news of the grog. "When I takes a drop, I'm for dancin', and where are the gurls?"

"Ah!" echoed Jim in a sigh born of lobscouse and the livid fat of diseased pork.

Finding that the captain did not make his appearance, Hardy kept the deck with Julia. Again they talked of the old home, the drunken stepmother, the withering indifference of the retired Commander R. N. to the loneliness and helplessness of his child, and to her prospects in life.

Hardy spoke of it with heat, and the girl's face was often hot with the passion of memory.

"What should I have done without you?" she said once and again, and still again. "But if I cannot find employment in Australia, I must return in this ship," and she looked at him with the eyes of a sweetheart.

"If anything happens to Captain Layard," said he, "no doubt I shall get command."

Now, "If anything should happen" is the roundabout of "If he should die," and people modestly thus speak of death as though it was anything, as though it was not the *only* thing that is real, to be expected without fear of disappointment.

"I believe he will grow quite mad long before we

arrive at Melbourne," said Julia; "but even taking him as he is, would the agents trust him?"

"You want to come home in this ship, Julia?" said Hardy.

"You are the only friend I have in the world," she answered; and thus they cooed without billing, for Jack was in strength forward, and the second mate walked the deck to windward, and a sailor stood at the wheel.

About a quarter before noon, but not till then, the captain emerged with his sextant. If he had come up with a face of madness, the sextant he held would have clothed him with all the sanity he needed in the sailors' opinion. But his face showed no distinctive marks of the condition of his mind, the expression was even calm; he seemed as one who was about to realise the consuming hope of his life; the shadow of the coming event subdued him. The crew were on deck gathered forward in all variety of sprawling posture, smoking and talking, with teeth sharpened by the hard and bitter fare of the sea. Also seven bells having been struck some time since, they knew that noon and a bumper of old Jamaica were at hand, and every eye was directed aft.

Hardy disappeared and returned with his sextant, and Candy fetched his, and the three men fell to screwing down the sun till its lower limb was like a wheel upon the ocean line. The captain never spoke, and Julia studying his face noticed the subdued look and the calmness, and felt a little despairful, for, poor heart, she was in love, and wanted the captain to go raving mad that Hardy might get command and marry her at Melbourne, and bring her home. O God, what joy for a heart so long

joyless! A home, a protector, a husband, on whose breast she could lean with her lips at his ear in softest murmurings of wifely confidence.

"Eight bells! Make it the bell eight!" and the four double chimes rang gladly along the decks and up aloft.

"Pass the word for the cabin servant," said the captain, speaking and looking as collectedly as the sanest of skippers might show in that first command of tacking, "Ready about!"

The man came aft in a hurry, impelled by the thirsty yearning of the forecastle mob, and in a couple or three minutes he was standing at the capstan just abaft the mast with a bucket on the "head," and a tot measure in his hand. The captain stood close to the man, and the crew gathered around. The Newfoundland stood at his master's side. Now was to be seen the most glowing canvas in the panorama which unfolds this ship's adventure. The picture was alive with its crowd of faces of seamen watching the lips of their commander, alive with the colour and diversity of their apparel, with the silent breathing of the white breast soaring to the height of the fiery streak of bunting, which trembled in a dog-vane from the main-royal truck. The sea was soft in caress and note, and Julia thought of the wayside fountain to which *she* as well as Hardy had listened in the night, when, in the pause, she heard the fall of the shower under the bow.

"My lads," began the captain, and Hardy watched him with strained attention, believing that the crew would see it, "this is my birthday, and I am departing from the custom of the sea in making a general holiday of it."

He grew pale and paler as he spoke, but his voice did not falter, and no change was visible in his expression save that a light as of secret exultation brightened his eye and accentuated his pallor.

"I have always tried to make a good master to my men, and to treat them like men and sailors, and not as dogs which other captains seem to find them."

This was attended by a growl of appreciation.

"So, my lads," continued the captain, "as this is my birthday, one and all of you, the mates, and the lady last, but not least, shall drink my health, and the health of the little boy who has left his drum behind him."

"May God bless you and him!" said one of the men, for this proved to be one of those touches of nature which made all those rough hearts akin.

"Now serve out — serve out, and handsomely!"

The boatswain drank first. And again and again and again the measure was filled until all hands of the sailors, saving the man at the wheel, had swallowed the fiery draught, many with a smack and a smile of relish. Then the wheel was relieved, and another bumper was swallowed with a "Many 'appy returns of the day, sir."

"Drink," said the captain to the attendant, and the man drained a full dose.

"Sweeten the measure for the two mates," said the captain.

This was quickly done. And then Hardy drank and then Candy, for both had the throats of the sea, which seem lined with brass when 'tis ten per cent. above proof. "Your health, sir" — and — "your health, sir," and the mates took it down.

"Now, Miss Armstrong, you will drink my

health," said the captain, and with the gallantry of an old beau he took her by the hand and led her into the cabin. She glanced at Hardy with a smile before she vanished.

The men scattered as they went forward to get their dinner. The captain took a wine-glass from a rack, and a bottle from a locker, and filled the glass with red wine.

"Drink to me and to the boy I am seeking, and then tell me where he is," he exclaimed as he extended the glass. She took it, and said with forced cheerfulness to humour him:

"Your health, Captain Layard, and many happy returns of this day, and my heart's gratitude to you for your kindness to me. And God will some day show you where your child is."

She drank half the contents of the glass. His eyes sparkled, and his face was grotesque with the workings of his dreadful exultation.

"Oh, you must drain it — you must drain it, Miss Armstrong, or it'll be bad luck and no pledge."

She drank the glass empty, and put it down upon the table. He gazed at her with extraordinary intentness as though he listened to hear her words, then swiftly entered his cabin, closed and bolted the door, and pulling out a loaded revolver from under the pillow in his bunk, seated himself, and with the weapon upon his knee in his grasp sat hearkening, with his eyes fastened upon the door.

The time slowly passed and still he continued to sit, grasping the pistol upon his knee, with his eyes of madness fixed upon the door. His face was now revolting with its look of burning expectation and triumph. Suddenly a stream of sunshine moved

slowly, like a spoke of a softly revolving wheel, over the carpeted deck of the captain's cabin, and any one might have known by the motions of the ship that she was not under command. You heard faint, vague sounds of trampling above, a dim noise as of a sick crowd poisoned by vapour and feebly struggling to escape, and in the midst of it the captain's door was struck: the blow was languid and repeated three or four times only, and no noise attended it.

The madman sprang from his chair and stood erect with the revolver half raised from his side, and his eyes sparkled in his face that was dark with murderous intent. Thus he stood whilst the spoke of light through the port-hole moved gradually round the cabin until it vanished, by which time all was silent without. The unhappy man resumed his seat and former posture, and thus it went for half an hour at least; then, always grasping his murderous weapon, he walked like one in the chamber of death, carefully opened the door, and peered out.

The first sight he witnessed was the figure of the chief mate, Hardy, stretched at its length and on its side within a pace or two of the threshold, and upon the locker on the port side of the table, a cushioned locker as comfortable as a couch, lay the form of Julia Armstrong; her right arm hung down, and she lay as apparently dead as Hardy. The captain stepped across the body of the mate and looked with devouring, sparkling eyes at the girl, while he seemed to listen for sounds above. Nothing was to be heard save the inner grumbling of the ship as she swayed helpless in arrest. Now and again the wheel chains clanked to the blow of the sea upon the rudder.

The captain went to the girl's side and looked at

her: her face was placid, pale, ghastly, and her lips a bright red. Thus exactly did Hardy's face show, and any one experienced in the symptoms of poisoning by laudanum or morphia would have known that these two people had been heavily drugged, even perhaps unto death.

It was the birthday of a madman in search of his drowned child, and they had drunk his health and the little drummer's. His face took on an air of hurry and bustle, and, always gripping his revolver, he stepped nimbly to the companion-steps and mounted them. He raised his head just above the companion-hood and looked; he saw that the man who had stood at the wheel was lying motionless beside it. Almost abreast of the companion was the curved form of Candy, who seemed to have been doubled up and then reeled into lifelessness. A few prostrate forms were to be seen forward, in the waist and about the forescuttle. They lay lifeless in the sleep or death of the drugged draught in which they had pledged their captain. In the forecastle lay the rest, some on the deck, some in their bunks, and every face showed as Hardy's and the girl's, placid, pale, and ghastly, and the lips a bright red. All the symptoms had been expended, the first pleasurable mental excitement, then the weariness, the headache, the intolerable weight of limb, the spinning and sickening giddiness, the drowsiness, the stupor, and now insensibility or death.

The captain rose in the hatch to his full height and stepped on to the deck, followed by the dog, which went to Candy and smelt him, and then with a low, uneasy growl went to the figure beside the wheel and sniffed at it. With a dreadful smile of

hope and rejoicing the captain thrust the pistol into a side pocket and, going to the wheel, put the helm hard a-starboard, and secured it by several turns of the end of the mainbrace.

This done, always preserving his horrible expression of lofty exaltation, he took the breaker out of the bow of the port quarter-boat, filled it from the scuttle-butt, and replaced it. God knows how he was directed in what he did; the instincts of habit and knowledge must have governed him. It is certain that he made his preparations for departure with the sanity of a healthy brain. His dog closely followed him, and seemed afraid. He then went below into the pantry and returned with his arms full of food, which he placed in the stern-sheets along with a tumbler which he pulled out of his pocket. He moved rapidly and his lips often worked, and he'd flash his gaze along the decks at that memorable, tragical picture of ship with lifeless figures upon the planks, with all her white canvas curving inwards, stirless in the stream of the breeze. She seemed to have been drugged too, and rolled with a kind of stagger upon the soft folds of the swell.

He went below again, the dog at his heels, and, entering his cabin, took a dog-collar and chain out of a locker and secured the noble animal to a leg of the table, which was cleated and immovable. When he had done this he pressed his lips to the dog's head and sobbed dryly and sighed, for the light in his eyes was too hot a fire for tears. The dog whined and wagged its tail, and looked a hundred questions with its gentle eyes.

"I shall bring him back, I shall bring him back, Sailor!" the captain muttered to the Newfoundland.

And all this time Hardy lay close beside the dog as dead to the eye as any corpse under the ground.

The captain went to the side of the girl and picked her up off the cushioned locker with the ease of a man lifting a child. With her motionless form in his arms he gained the deck and laid her in the boat, passing her under the after-thwart, so that her head lay low in the stern-sheets. He sprang for a colour in the flag-locker and placed the bunting that was ready rolled under her head. She never sighed, she never stirred. Not paler nor calmer could her face have shown on the pillow of death.

Now the boat was to be lowered, and he went to work thus: he cast adrift the gripes which had held the boat steady betwixt the davits, and then he slackened the falls at the bow, belaying the tackle, and then he slackened the falls at the stern, belaying the tackle; and so by degrees the boat sank in irregular jerks to the surface of the water. He sprang on to the bow tackle and descended with the nimbleness of a monkey, with wonderful swiftness unhooked the blocks, and the boat was free. Next he stepped the mast upon which the sail lay furled, then the rudder; then shoved clear and hoisted the small square of lug, and in a few minutes he was blowing away gently into the boundless blue distance, looking all about him with a proud but ghastly smile for a sight of his missing boy, whilst the girl lay like the dead in the bottom of the boat.

CHAPTER XII.

JULIA CALLS "JOHNNY!"

It was about half-past two o'clock in the afternoon and the sun shone hotly. The breeze was a pleasant wind for that boat, and the captain put her dead before it and blew onwards into the boundless distance, squarely seated at the amidship helm, with the white and placid face of the drugged girl at his feet.

He would often look at her with a passionate eagerness, and then direct his brilliant eyes over the sea, and his countenance was now shocking with its expression of real madness, charged with the ghastly illumination of his one maniacal belief, that the girl, who was fresh from the sea when he missed his boy, knew where he was and would take him to the child, and then they would return to the ship, and once more the drum would rattle and the whistle awaken the birds in the rigging.

Never before in all human tradition of ocean life had fate painted upon the bosom of the deep a picture more wonderful by virtue of its secret and tragic meaning. There would be nothing in the mere scene of a beautiful clipper ship under all plain sail, her canvas hollowing inwards visibly, to all intents and purposes derelict; there would be nothing in the

spectacle of a little open boat borne onwards by the humming heart of its swelling square of canvas, steered by a lonely figure, the other being hidden. It might be to a distant eye the flight of a single survivor from a floating pest-house. But it was the story of the thing which makes it so extraordinary that I who am writing pause with astonishment, dismayed also by the lack of the exquisite cunning I need to submit the truth.

The girl had been drugged with morphia, but in what dose, and in what doses the men, it is impossible to conjecture. The madman reading the book of directions may have understood it, but insanity had rendered memory useless when it came to his mixing the poison with the liquor and the wine. But she was not dead; he would have found that out if he had bared her breast and put his ear to the white softness. But would she die in that sleep which was as death? for I believe it is the heart's action that fails in such cases, and at any moment her soul might return to God.

But he! poor unhappy wretch, if he understood what his mad but most moving love for his child had impelled him to do, his perception would not be as ours. His heart burned with desire that she should awake and tell him in which direction he should steer, for already the ship was a toy astern, three spires of ice-like radiance dipping to the eye on the brows of the blue swell as the boat rose and sank, jewelling the water with two foam-threaded lines of little yeasty bubbles.

Would she ever awaken? How long would she continue in sleep? To some a dose of morphia professionally prescribed will yield a long night's rest

not wholly unrefreshing, though the drug is obnoxious to the brain, which in time it murders. Therefore she might sleep into the early hours of the night.

But these were not *his* speculations. His mind was intent on one object, and he held the boat straight before the wind, waiting for her to look at him and rise, and point to the spot where his boy was.

It passed into about an hour before sunset.

From time to time the captain had laid his hand gently upon the girl's brow, believing she would open her eyes and speak to him. He was like a child whose grave or tragic act was beyond his mind's capacity to understand. He was painfully haggard, and sweat drops were on his forehead and cheeks, but the dreadful fire was always in his eyes. And once he stared fixedly over the port bow of the boat as though his poor brain had shaped the vision of his child: he stared as though he beheld the phantom, and when it vanished out of the perfidious cell which had created it he sighed and frowned.

He took no heed of sensation; thirst and hunger may have been his, but he never left the helm to drink or eat. At the hour I have named the westering sun was beginning to empurple the east, and he was steering toward the point where the evening star would rise. More than half the moon was hanging in a broken shape of dim pearl over the boat's bows. All at once the captain's ceaseless stare at the ocean brought his eyes to an object almost directly ahead. He was a sailor, and his afflicted reason could not deceive him. Right ahead and within half an hour's sail — so low seated was the gunwale of that boat

— lay a small vessel, partly dismasted and deep sunk. She was painted black. Her lower masts were white, and both foresail and mainsail were hanging, but the trysail was stowed.

"He will be there! he will be there!" cried the captain in a voice that swept like a shriek from his lips, and as the words left him the girl, with a long, strange sigh, opened her eyes full upon the wild nightmare face that was on a line with her head, for he had sprung to his feet.

"He is there!" he shouted again.

Then looking down he saw her watching him, and had he been sane would have witnessed the awakening reason in her darkening into horror. She tried to sit up, but her body was heavy as lead.

"Oh, what is this? Where am I?" she asked, more in a mutter than in clear speech.

"He is there!" he cried, pointing with a frantic gesture, "and you have known it throughout your sleep. Look!" He stooped, put his hands under her arms and lifted her out of the bottom of the boat into the stern-sheets, against whose back-board she sank.

Now morphia gives you but sleep if it does not kill you, and reason with many is immediately active when slumber is ended; but the captain's face alone would have sufficed to stimulate the most sluggish consciousness into clear perception, and without understanding the reason of it she grasped her situation.

She was alone in a boat with the mad captain of the *York*, and there was nothing in sight save the everlasting circle of the sea girdling a small broken vessel toward which the boat was running, for the

captain had his hand upon the yoke, and the little fabric was dead before it once again.

Despair laid the ice-cold hand of death upon the poor girl's heart. What could she do? What would *he* do?

As the sun slowly floated down the slope he was glorifying, the moon brightened her broken face. Julia's lips were dry; her tongue had the rasp of a cat's upon the roof of her mouth.

"Is there water here?" she asked.

"Oh, yes. You shall have water. Put your hand upon this. What sha'n't you have who have helped me to find him!"

She extended her hand and held the yoke steady, and he went into the bows with the glass and filled it from the breaker, all as sensibly as though he was right in mind; but he stood two or three moments to look at the vessel they were nearing and talk to her.

She drank with the thirst of fever, and then perfect realisation possessing her, a little impulse of hope quickened the beat of her heart, for she thought to herself, made cool by hope, "There are people in that ship, and I shall be saved."

The vessel was a small brig, floating on a cargo of timber. She showed a tolerable height of side, and judging from her condition she had started a butt, and the inrush had overmastered the pump, and as her davits were empty her people had no doubt got away in the boats. She made a churchyard picture for forlornness, with the broken moon hanging over her, though daylight still throbbed in folds of cloud in the deep west.

Julia saw with a fainting heart that the brig was

deserted, and she turned her eyes up to God and asked what should she do?

The captain stood in silence, with one hand backward upon the yoke, his head inclined forward with intent, searching stare.

"He may be in that brig," at last he said. "What moved then? No, 'twas the swing of the forebrace. And if he is not in that vessel," he continued, in a voice of cunning, "you who know where he is will tell me where to steer."

She brought the whole of her wits together in her resolution to live, and remembered that she had given some order to this man's insanity by her system of answering his talk. She exclaimed with all the tranquillity she could summon:

"If he is not in that vessel, Captain Layard, you will let me rest in her for the night, because if you keep me sitting in this open boat I shall be worn out, or I might die — I am not strong — and how, then, could I help you to find little Johnny?"

"Right! You are right," he answered, swiftly; "you shall rest in that brig if he is not there; but if he is there," changing his voice into a note of triumph, he added, "we must rejoin the ship, because I want the men to see him. And I am dying for his company at night, and for the sound of his drum."

As he spoke these words the boat was alongside the abandoned timberman, and with the dexterity of a sailor — for in all professional work he was as sane as the sanest — he put the helm down, sprang to let go the halliards of the lug, and secured the boat by passing her painter through a channel plate.

This brig had old-fashioned channels, which were

platforms secured to the ship's side so as to give a wide spread to the shrouds and backstays. The boat sat close beside the main-channel. With the resolution of one who works for life the girl seized the lanyards of the dead-eyes, and with the ease which her graceful figure would have promised gained the platform of channel, and a minute later the deck.

With aberration disciplined by professional habit the captain went to work, his intentions being perfectly sane, save that he discovered an extraordinary anxiety and eagerness to get on board the brig. He knew that he and the girl were to pass the night in the vessel, and so, with the quick motions of madness and with the strength which madness often confers, he got the breaker of water into the main-channel, then placed beside it the stock of provisions he had stowed away aft, and called to Julia:

"Do you see him?"

"Come on deck, and we will look," she answered, for now that she stood on a solid deck her nerve had returned.

"Steady this breaker on the rail," he called.

He handed it on to the rail, and she held it. He then threw the provisions on to the deck, leapt inboard, and placed the breaker betwixt a couple of loose planks. The moon was shining brightly, and its light rippled in lines of lustrous pearl. The heave of the sea was slow and solemn, the wind was soft and weak, and the west was still scored with streaks of crimson; but night was at hand, and some stars were trembling in the east.

She was one of those little brigs which are among the quaintest of the marine objects of the port or harbour. Her forward-deck from the main-hatch-

way was heaped with timber cleverly stowed, with room for a little caboose and a narrow alley to it from the hatch. Some of the running rigging lay loose about the decks, and this gave her a look of confusion. Otherwise, from the appearance of her deck cargo, it was clear that she had not been hurt by weather. A deck-house nearly filled the quarter-deck; there was just room on either hand for a man to walk.

The captain stood silent for a minute staring about him. He then muttered:

"Nothing moves; I see nothing alive. He may be there. Come, for it will be you to see him first."

He went to the door of the deck-house, and Julia followed. Two windows stood on either side the door, and four windows ran down either wall. But when they entered the moon made so faint a light through the door and the windows that it was difficult to see. Yet distinctive features of the interior were visible: a table, three or four chairs, and a bulkhead abaft, which might screen from the living-room two holes for the skipper and his mate to sleep in.

"Call him," whispered the captain, as though he stood in a dead-house.

"Johnny!" cried the girl, "come to father if you are here, Johnny!"

She had a wonderful spirit to say this. She felt the horrible mockery of it and the recoil of its ghastly derisiveness upon her heart, but she knew that Hardy could not be far off, and would seek her. The passion of life was strong in her, and she judged that her only chance lay in inspiriting the poor man's dreadful conviction that she could help him to find his son.

"Call him again," said the captain, and again she called.

He advanced a step, and she saw him in the faint suffusion straining in a posture of desperate gaze, of desperate hearkening, as though his teeth were set and the sweat of blood was on his brow, and the palms of his hands were bloody with the penetration of the finger-nails.

At that moment she heard a single stroke of a bell. She started with a cry, with instant rejoicing, for she believed there were men in the vessel.

"What was that?" said the captain.

"A bell!" she exclaimed.

"O God! it may be Johnny!" he shouted, and he rushed through the open door.

She quickly followed; she was not a superstitious fool, she was a girl at sea, and, as a girl might, she supposed that if a bell were struck upon a ship's deck it was by a man.

A small bell was hung betwixt the foremast and the foremost end of the galley or caboose, and immediately under it lay, bottom up, secured to the deck, a small tub of a boat. It was easy to understand why the bell should have tolled. It had been struck by some bight of buntline or clewline in the sway of the brig as she heeled to the fold, and the sharp return of the bell jerked the tongue against the metal side in a single stroke.

But the captain was too mad to understand this, and Julia was a girl at sea without eyes for bights of running gear. She was startled, nay, a sudden horror of superstition visited her when following the captain. She stood near the bell and saw no signs of human creature. She cast looks of fear all about;

one, even one, man would protect her against the horrible yokedom of this passage. The planks had the sheen of satin in the moonlight, and the power of the satellite sufficed to fling dark shadows upon the decks, and these shadows moved as the brig rolled. But she saw no man; and what ghostly hand then had struck that bell? For the night might go before the swing of the bight of gear should, by adjustment of the rolling of the vessel, exactly hit the bell again and make it ring.

The captain began to call, "Johnny, Johnny, where are you? Come out of your hiding-place, little sonny. Here's father waiting for you."

He breathed deep, listening and gazing about him; but no other reply reached his ear than the sob of water under the bow, the moan of night wind in the rigging, the sullen slap of canvas against the mast.

"Do you see him?" the captain asked, and the eyes of madness sparkled in the moonshine as he turned his gaze upon the girl.

She answered, huskily, "No, I do not see him. Who struck that bell?"

"He did," said the captain. "O God! O everlasting Father! Why does he hide himself from me?"

He clasped his hands and raised them and looked up, and in that posture he muttered as though he prayed, and all the while Julia was staring about her, faint with fear, and with the sight of that imploring figure of afflicted manhood; for who had struck the bell? And did the dead come to life again in phantoms? And was the spirit of Johnny invisibly present?

Poor Julia!

"He may come out of his hiding-place if we go aft," said the captain in his voice of cunning. "Stop!"

He stepped to the little caboose and entered it.

"Not here, not here," he groaned as he came out, "but we must have patience. We will sit and wait. We'll sit and watch the deck, and at any moment you may see his little figure coming along."

Weak with fear and superstition, and the horror of her ghastly situation, she followed the miserable man to the deck-house. He entered and brought out two chairs, which he placed in front of the door, and they sat down. It was certain that the man believed the child to be in this abandoned vessel, and this was assurance to Julia that he would not compel her to enter the boat and sail away in search of the boy. The thought inspired some faint hope; she knew that this was no unfrequented tract of ocean, and that even if Hardy did not seek her, any hour next day might bring along some ship which she could signal to by flourishing her handkerchief. But Hardy! She began to think whilst her dreadful companion sat beside her staring along the moon-lighted deck, and waiting for his boy to come. She fully understood that she had been drugged; her thoughts went to the medicine-chest; had the captain poisoned Hardy and the rest of the crew that he might steal her from the ship? This puzzled her, for if the crew had been drugged they might have been drugged to death by the irresponsible hand of this madman, and Hardy would be lost to her for ever, and his ship would not come to rescue her.

These were her thoughts "too deep for tears," but

it was fortunate that she had slept soundly and well in the boat, for now, though wearied in bone and faint at heart, she was as sleepless as the poor, tireless creature beside her. She could not have endured to enter the deck-house and rest there; she needed the companionship of the moon and the stars, and the visible surface of the deep blackening out from either hand the wake of the luminary to its limitless recesses. The whisper of the wind in the rigging was companionship, but the movements of the shadows upon the whitened planks were a perpetual fear, for who had struck the bell? and was the vessel haunted? Her throat was parched and she asked for water.

"Certainly; oh, yes. He is long in coming, but when he comes we'll rejoin the ship," the captain said as he rose, and quite sanely he went to the breaker, filled the tumbler, and returned with a glassful and a biscuit.

There was the courtesy of good breeding in the poor fellow as he handed her the glass, for the soul that is never mad will shine through disease, and Captain Layard, who was born a gentleman, proved a gentleman even when insane. She drank gratefully and ate the biscuit.

He took the glass from her and filled it for himself, but did not eat. Then he returned to his chair, and that dreadful watch on deck again began. Often he would say:

"Do you see him? Why should he keep in hiding?"

And sometimes he would quit his seat and go to the rail, and look into the sea over the side.

The water swarmed with fire this night; the chilly

sea-glow started in fibres, in clouds like luminous smoke, in coils like revolving eels, and it is conceivable that the crazed eye which was bent upon these lights should fashion them into phantasms, into grotesque shapes, into the crowd of brassy faces which the sealed but waking vision beholds when the brain is drugged. He would spend twenty minutes in searching the waters, and then cross to the other side and spend a quarter of an hour in a like hunt. Always when he returned to his chair he would mutter to himself, "Why doesn't he come?" And once he started up with a frantic cry which was frightful with inarticulateness; he dashed his hand to his forehead and held it there, with his left arm stiffened out and the fingers curled with the agony of his mind.

At that moment the bell was again struck, and now it was Julia who shrieked. She started up and bent her head forward, thinking to see the figure that had struck the bell. The captain broke into a wild laugh.

"I see him! I see him!" he cried. "O Johnny, I'm your father!" and he started into a run with his arms outstretched, as if to seize the phantom he beheld.

He ran past the bell, and crying, "I am coming, Johnny, I am coming!" climbed on to the top of the deck load, and in a strange croaking voice, as though it proceeded from some huge sea-bird sailing overhead, he exclaimed:

"There you are at last, my Johnny! Father is coming to you!" and sprang overboard.

Julia fell upon the deck and lay lifeless in a swoon.

CHAPTER XIII.

THEY MEET

It was moonlight on the sea, and the full-rigged ship *York* lay with her canvas aback, silently heaving upon the swell. But by the eye of a sailor a certain moisture would have been visible in the silver suffusion, and he might hardly have needed to look at the glass to guess that this calm scene of ocean night would in a few hours show a changed face. The time was shortly after ten.

The lamp in the cabin was unlighted, but the moon shone upon the skylight, and the darkness was whitened by it, and all features of the interior were visible. Hardy lay stretched upon the cabin deck, and within an arm's reach of him rested the great Newfoundland dog, secured by a chain to the leg of the table. The picture was wonderful for its human stillness: you heard no tramp of foot, no call of voice. The very sails slept against the masts, and nothing was audible but the complaint of a bulkhead or some strong fastening as the ship sluggishly took the run of the fold.

All of a sudden Hardy opened his eyes, and having opened them he kept them open, staring with just that look of bewilderment and astonish-

ment which had been in Julia's dawning gaze. He tried to raise his head and thought it was a cannon-ball, but the dog had noticed the motion, and instantly alert with joy barked in deep-throated notes, with endless wagging of the tail.

This tremendous noise close in his ear was as galvanism to the dead frog. Hardy sat up and looked at the dog and then looked round him, and feeling all the sensations of a man drugged with liquor, believed, without being able to remember, that he had fallen down drunk. This is the sensation of the man who is fortunate enough to awake from the stupefaction of laudanum.

"Good God! What is this?" Hardy muttered, and he squeezed his brow with his hands as you would wring a swab to drain the wet out of it.

Then slowly memory began to operate, whilst the dog was straining to reach him and caress him. "My God!" he thought after a passage of reflection, "the madman poisoned us when we drank his health!" And then it all came to him. He rose to his feet, but his legs trembled and he could hardly stand. "Where is Julia?" and next, "Where is the captain?"

The dog began to bark with something of fury, and Hardy with trembling hands removed the collar from the brute's neck. The noble animal sprang upon Hardy in affectionate caress and nearly felled him with its weight, then dashed into the captain's cabin, the door of which swung ajar, and Hardy followed. He could hardly see, it was so dark here, and he felt the captain's bunk and wandered round on staggering legs, feeling. His throat was as hot as the bowl of a lighted pipe, and it felt the hotter

when he heard the dog in the cabin lapping at some water in the dish that was meant for its use. He went to the swing-tray, where there was water, and drank a full draught, which greatly helped him both in wits and body, then entered Julia's cabin and felt the bunk and found she was not there. "What has he done?" he thought, and with heavy limbs he made his way on deck.

The light was brilliant enough after the cabin gloom, and he could see clearly. He stood in the hatch, holding by the companion-hood.

Abreast of him lay, in convulsed posture, the figure of the second mate, Candy. He turned his head and saw the shape of a man lying prostrate beside the wheel. He took note by the aid of the moon that the wheel was lashed, then his eyes travelled to a pair of empty davits, and he staggered to them and looked down. He could trace the black lines of the falls, and saw the blocks as the ship swayed, kindling fire in the dark water.

He was a sailor, and at once understood it all. A groan escaped his lips whilst he thought, "He has gone away in the boat with Julia to seek his son. How am I to recover her?" And the horror of her situation — alone in an open boat with a madman — penetrated his heart, and seemed to petrify him. He could just distinguish two or three dark figures overhanging the forecastle rail, and a couple of sailors lay motionless upon the deck a little way abaft the galley.

The dog had bounded up out of the cabin, and was wandering around sniffing at one silent figure and another: no doubt he was in quest of his master. Then it occurred to Hardy to remember that the

grog had been served out at noon. Suppose he had got away at two.

What sort of breeze was then blowing?

He reflected and remembered.

He would sail dead away and right before it, for he had no destination, and was sure to shape the crow's course. "Grant her four miles an hour, and this is ten o'clock," he thought, pulling out his watch and holding it to the moon. "The boat may have covered thirty miles of sea. They may have been fallen in with and rescued, for Julia would shriek her story, and the captain might believe that Johnny was aboard. But how shall I know? How shall I know? I must take it that the boat is still afloat, and Julia must be saved."

He considered the direction of the wind, and made up his mind to the course that must be steered; but now as to the crew. He went to Candy and, kneeling, shook him, put his hand to his face, put his ear to his mouth, and easily saw that he was dead. The discovery thrilled through him like the cut of a sword on the shoulder. He walked to the figure beside the wheel, and in a little while could not doubt that the man, too, was dead. It was not because he was a doctor's son that he needed to be informed of the action of a heavy dose of laudanum, or some poisonous drug of that sort, upon the movements of a weak heart. But there were live men forward, and with sluggish motions of his limbs he went that way.

He stooped over the two figures abaft the galley, and detected life in them. He then stepped on to the forecastle, and the first man he spoke to was the boatswain, who was resting his head in his arm

upon the rail. He now saw there were three others near him, and two were sitting on the coamings of the forescuttle.

"The captain was mad and has drugged us," said Hardy. "He has taken the lady with him, and I want to give chase. Where are the rest of the men?"

"As the Lord is God," answered the boatswain, "don't my precious head know it's been drugged. Talk o' Shanghaing! But I never knowed it from the hand of a skipper nor worse than this."

"I want to trim sail, and make a start to rescue the lady," said Hardy.

"You'll not get the men to move if there was twenty ladies to be rescooed," responded the boatswain, who spoke as if he was drunk.

"I ha'n't got strength to lift a sprat to my mouth if I was starving," said one of the men, who leaned with folded arms as though at any moment the three of them would sink exhausted to the deck.

It drove Hardy crazy with a consuming desire to start in chase to see their helplessness and to feel his own. But what was he to do! Here were four men, and two sitting on the coamings of the scuttle, and two alive, though prostrate, near the galley — eight men, and more perhaps below in the forecastle.

So he went to the hatch and asked the two men how they felt. They answered with curses, swearing they'd have hove the captain overboard before he should ha' poisoned them.

"He was mad," said Hardy. "I knew it, and wondered you didn't see it and ask me to act. He has poisoned me and stolen my sweetheart away to her destruction, but we'll chase the beggar the moment we are able."

They growled out something and he looked down the scuttle. A sailor had lighted the slush lamp; some man, perhaps, who was less ill than the others on recovery, or who had the best sense then about. Hardy descended and stood under the hatch, looking round him. I would not like to say how many men were here, because I do not know what the owner of the ship chose to think her complement. Hardy might have counted eight or ten men, in bunks, hammocks, or seated on their sea-chests. The faces he saw were ghastly, as though this ocean-parlour were plague-stricken. He went from one to another to see if all were alive, and they all proved so. The swing of the flame flung shadows like contortions on the visible faces. It was hot down here, and Hardy felt sick with the drug, whose effects were not yet expended. Some breathed deep: the human respiration threaded the subdued moan of water.

"What's been done to us?" said a man sitting on a chest.

"We've all been drugged by a lunatic who's carried off my sweetheart," answered Hardy. "There's to be a shift of weather, and the ship's under all plain sail and aback, and the helm lashed. Any of you here able to come on deck and swing the yards and take the wheel?"

The devil a one! So Hardy climbed with leaden limbs through the square hole and walked slowly aft, and sat down on the skylight.

The Newfoundland came out of a shadow and lay at his feet. A fair light, with power of painting jetty strokes that slided upon the pale planks, flowed from the moon. But the broken orb was hazy, and the mate's eyes saw the darkness of wind

gathering in vapour in the west or thereabouts. So the breeze that had been steady all day was to harden sooner or later out of its quarter, and the ship under all plain sail lay aback to it. But Hardy felt too weak to move the wheel, even if by so doing he could have helped the ship; nor, though she could have swung to fill her breasts with canvas, which would have been impossible, he'd have let her lie as she was because, with the yards trimmed as they stood, he couldn't have shaped a course for the direction which he believed the madman had taken.

He sat and thought and waited. It was miserable to see the dead figure of Candy lying there, and miserable when he turned his head to see the dead figure of the sailor beside the wheel. What an unparalleled act! How deep and cunning beyond all credibility, and yet as true as the misty radiance floating in shimmering folds upon the dark and silent heave! His brain was every minute clearing, and he realised more intently as the time slipped by that, if yonder shadow meant heavy weather, the girl was lost, unless a passing ship had picked them up; but how would Hardy know?

In about half an hour one of the figures at the forecastle rail came slowly aft. He stopped and bent over the two forms lying abaft the galley. Hardy heard him speak to them, and he could just catch the murmur of their replies. They had therefore come to, and no doubt would be sitting up and moving about shortly.

The figure that had left the forecastle rail came along, and Hardy saw it was the boatswain. The man went to the body of Candy, and looking round said, in a hollow voice:

"Is he dead?"

"Ay, stone dead; and so is yonder," replied Hardy.

"What took him to do it?" asked the boatswain, coming to Hardy's side.

"Why does a madman tear up his clothes?" replied Hardy. "How are those fellows in the waist there?"

"They're reviving," answered the boatswain. "He must ha' put plenty in. Dommed if ever I was treated like this before by the capt'n of a ship. Tell you what, sir, there's weather comin' along," and he cast the eye of an experienced sailor up aloft at the canvas and then at the moon, at which he shook his head.

Yes, her broken face had taken a glutinous reddish look as though she was a smear of pink currant jam, and her light was gone out of the sea. There was no more wind, but it was thickening westwards, and you might look for a slap of squall any moment, the shriek of the shot of the storm gun sweeping betwixt shroud and mast, and the ship lay aback under all plain sail, and there was no longer light of moonshine on her canvas.

"Just see if we can't get men enough to brace these yards square," said Hardy. "We can let go and clew up and wait till the men are strong enough to stow the canvas; but if we lie like this something may come to whip the masts out of her."

But it was a full half-hour before hands enough could be collected, and they all seemed as though freshly awakened from the crimp's debauch; their knees shook, their heads lolled, they lifted their arms as though they were operated upon by slow

machinery. Yet the business, in a fashion, was contrived. They clewed up the royals and topgallant-sails, they hauled up the mainsail, they let go some jib and staysail halliards, and they brailed the mizzen to the mast. The least dead of the poor fellows took the helm, and the ship with her head to the eastward, with much flap of canvas aloft, bowed slowly over the black run of swell. Her pace was very slow because the wind was light, and all the canvas she showed to it were two topsails and her forecourse.

This was as Hardy desired, because the moon was slowly vanishing like a dimming stain of bloody ooze, and it promised a black night. If he had held the ship moving under all her wings she would have passed the boat if she had not run her down, for it was his conviction, heaven inspired, that the madman had blown away straight before it, and how prophetically right he was in that we all know, and yet for some hours it remained very quiet, though black as the inside of a coal sack. Again this was as Hardy could have prayed for, as this raven serenity promised security to the boat, and if it lasted till daybreak she might be in sight.

The mate and another man placed the two bodies on the quarter-deck side by side under the bulwarks, clear of the gear, and hid them under a tarpaulin. It would not have been proper nor decent to have buried them out of hand, for though Hardy had no doubt that they were dead, he yet felt that time should be given to prove it; and so the two figures lay motionless under the tarpaulin.

The stars and moon went out and it blew very faint with a deepening of the blackness overhead,

so that you looked for lightning. About three o'clock some of the men had come out of the forecastle, and by Hardy's commands the galley fire was lighted and strong coffee brewed. This wonderfully refreshed the men, and Hardy then asked them if they thought they were strong enough to go aloft and furl the lighter canvas, as he could not tell at what moment heavy weather might set in. The poor fellows managed it somehow, but were long over it. Then as many as were equal furled the mainsail, at which hour it was hard upon daybreak. In the blackness of those small hours it was impossible to guess the character of the sky, and in which direction the soot of it was trending. But all of a sudden the wind freshened with a long, melancholy wail, as though 'twas the spirit of the night that was dying, the troubled water ran in fitful flashes, and the ship broke the brine into white foam about her. The mate talked with the boatswain beside the quarter-deck skylight: they were both almost recovered, and you could hear reviving life in voices about the deck.

"I have no doubt," said Hardy, "that the captain blew away straight from the ship's side, because you see he had no destination in his mind."

"Not onlikely," answered the boatswain.

"Suppose I'm right," continued Hardy, "then I reckon we're not abreast of her yet; but if I pass the boat before the light comes and it proves thick, as I fancy you'll find it, we shall miss her for good, and I want my sweetheart badly."

"That's quite natural," said the boatswain. "We're walkin' now and the breeze freshens, and if you think you are right, sir, in steering as we go,

then what d'ye say to hauling up the foresail and lowering the maintopsail-yard on the cap, and manning the reef-tackles?"

"Get it done," said Hardy.

It was easily done, for it was not a furling job. A bit of sea was beginning to run; it smacked the ship under the counter, and flooded the wake with light. Hardy walked up and down the deck, mad with desire for daybreak. He was steering by a theory of a madman's action, and he might be wrong, and if he was wrong — but even if he was right, how would the boat fare in the sea that was now running with a madman at the yoke, and the full sail and tearing sheet gripped by the hand of madness?

These were considerations scarce endurable to the man, and for ever he was sending searching glances ahead for the ghastly hue of the dawn. The day broke at last, and it was a day of gloom and mist and a narrow horizon; the sky was a dome of apparently motionless vapour, and each surge ere it broke arched in an edge of flint, and the whole surface was an olive-green decorated by lines of foam.

As yet there was no great weight in the wind, but the sailor's eyes saw that more was to be expected. Hardy went to his cabin for a glass of his own. He slung it over his shoulder, and regaining the deck sprang aloft to the height of the mizzen-top, from which altitude, with the glass set firmly against the topmast-rigging, he searched the sea. As the lenses made the circuit there leapt into the field of the telescope the apparition of a little brig unmistakenly derelict, with loose canvas hollowing like a kite against the masts. He examined her intently, and

then muttering, "They may be aboard that vessel. It is a chance. The madman may have taken refuge, or thought his son was there," he threw the strap of the telescope over his head, and noting the brig's bearing, descended.

He walked rapidly aft to the compass, and found that the brig was in sight from the quarter-deck. She bore a little to the west of south. The Newfoundland, seeing Hardy looking, spied the brig and barked his report of a sail in sight.

"Lads!" shouted Hardy, running a little way forward, "there is a brig on the quarter. We'll see if she can give us any news, although abandoned. Starboard mainbrace, starboard foretopsail-brace smartly as possible, my lads. Starboard your helm!"

And slowly, for the helm was wearily worked and the braces were dragged by languid hands, the yards came round, and then the maintopsail was mast-headed, and the ship with the wind right abeam crushed the flint-like surge into froth, and forged ahead for the abandoned vessel.

It was time to make for her if she was to be visited at all, for the horizon was narrowing and narrowing with the thickness of rain, and soon within the distance of a mile the brig would have vanished. Hardy's glass was full of powerful lenses — its magnifying power was double that of the ship's telescope; when he now put it to his eye he instantly saw a figure just this side of the brig's main-rigging waving something white.

His heart brightened. He looked again. She was a woman, and alone! The boatswain was coming aft as Hardy looked forward.

"There's a figure aboard that brig," he shouted. "It's a woman, and she's waving a handkerchief."

"She'll be yourn," said the boatswain, and as surprise did not immediately follow perception, he added, "Well, I'm damned!"

"Stand by to back the maintopsail!" roared Hardy, who was delirious with excitement. "Let some hands lay aft and clear away the starboard quarter-boat ready for lowering. I'd board her if twice this sea was running. I knew I was right. I knew he'd head straight away. I knew I'd find her by shaping the madman's course."

"Suppose it isn't her?" said the boatswain.

"To hell with your supposings!" yelled Hardy. "In any case it's a woman, and she must be taken off."

The men came aft and got ready the boat and stood aft, prepared for the command to back the maintopsail. Again Hardy levelled the glass. The girl — for we know who it was — had ceased to flutter her handkerchief; but the wind, full of wet, bewildered the eye, and the mate would make no more of it than this: the figure was a woman.

He headed the *York* so as to heave to to windward of the brig, and a little while before the topsail-yard was backed Hardy had seen and mentally kissed the poor girl's face in the lens, and frantic with joy was waving his cap to her, whilst she, guessing who it would be that motioned thus, tossed her handkerchief again and again.

The ship was brought to a stand, and Hardy shouted, "I am coming to fetch you."

She waved her hand. There was an ugly bit of sea between for a boat, choppy, with deep sucking

hollows, and plenty of spiteful foam to whiten over the low gunwales.

"Who'll volunteer?" said Hardy. "Three will do."

"Blast me," said one of them, "if I don't feel as I should be in the road in a boat."

"*You*'re likely," said Hardy, pointing to another — "and you, and you. Three will do, and it shall be two pound a man, which God knows I wouldn't offer for a deed of duty, only you're lowered by the captain's drug."

"Right y' are, sir," said Jim, who got in the boat and was followed by Tom and Joe.

The mate sprang into the stern-sheets and shipped the rudder.

"Lower away handsomely!" he shouted, "and drop the hauling part that we may overhaul the falls."

Unfortunately the blocks were without patent clip hooks, and the moment the boat was water-borne the fore-bottom of her was nearly wrenched out by her fall into the hollow ere the languid bow oar could release the block. But it was done, and they got away.

She nearly filled three times in her passage. The drag of the oars was not strong enough; they wanted the long and steady sweep of their old power to rescue the boat from the arch of foam astern. Yet they managed to get alongside, and with the swift leap of the sailor Hardy gained the main-chains, and in a minute was standing on the main-deck, with Julia sobbing in his arms.

"Where is the captain?" were almost the first *words* Hardy addressed to her.

"He drowned himself," she answered, speaking sobbingly with tumult of passion. "He made me sit there beside him" — she pointed to the deck-house front — "and watch for the coming of the boy. The bell was struck — it was strangely struck. He thought it was his child, and he ran forward and climbed upon those pieces of timber as though his little son was beckoning, and then he cried out he was coming and sprang overboard, and I fainted. Oh, since I returned to consciousness what a time it has been! And yet — and yet I felt you were near and would come."

As she spoke the wind howled with a sudden note of raving in the rigging, and deep as the brig was her loose canvas was inswept till it depressed her by a couple of strakes, and you might have thought she was settling, and with this sudden blast came on a heavy squall of rain, which thickened the air till the ship that was on the quarter loomed a surging and streaming phantom. At the same moment cries were heard over the side. Hardy rushed to the rail, and what did he see?

The boat was stove and full! One man had disappeared, and the two others were floating a fathom or two beyond her locked in each other's embrace.

Hardy sprang to the brig's quarter, crying, "O God! O my God!" as he ran.

He slipped some bights of running gear off a pin, and yelling "Look out for the end of this line!" he hove.

One could not swim, and clung to the other who could, and there was no virtue in a rope's end though flung by an angel of God to save them. For one moment the line was close; the desperate heave

of the half-drowned fabric dragged it fathoms out of reach. The pitiless seas broke over them, and with agony of mind, and a heart almost in halves, Hardy saw them vanish.

The girl stood beside him with uplifted arms, frozen by horror into the marble rigidity of a statue. It was going to blow a gale. The black scowl of the sky had the menace of storm in its fixity. No yellow curl of scud, no faintness here or there relieved that grim, austere, down-look. The day might have been closing, so dusky it was with the flying sheets of rain and the white haze torn out of the foaming brow by the rending hand of the wind. The seas swung fast and fierce, and serpentine pillars of white water leapt on high from the brig's side, and fled in shrieking clouds of sparkles to leeward.

"We shall lose the ship," said Hardy, with the coolness of desperation. "We could not launch that boat," and he pointed to the small, chubby fabric that lay stowed near the foremast; "and if we could she would not live a minute. What became of your boat?"

"I looked for her," she answered, "and saw her floating yonder in the moonlight. The captain fastened her rope to something and it slipped."

"Come out of the wet," said he. "We can do no good here. They'll keep the ship hove to, and the weather may clear by noon."

They entered the deck-house, and Hardy began to explore it, and in the two little cabins aft he found all the information he required about this abandoned brig. The log-book was dated down to two days earlier, and the entries were by a hand that spelt

speech of Newcastle-on-Tyne. She was the ... of Sunderland. The sea began to flow into ... on a sudden to some gape or yarn of butt-end; ... can't tell how it is until you dry-dock them. ... would have gone down in an hour, despite her ..., but for the timber on which she floated. By ... entries it was clear the crew had stuck to her for ... days. Hardy then guessed that, growing weary ... waiting for a ship, they had gone away in the ... In one cabin he found a telescope and an ... fashioned quadrant, some wearing apparel, and ... hat such as an old skipper might wear, bronzed ... weather, and instantly suggesting to an active ... imagination a round, purple face, streaks of white ... ker, a chocolate-coloured shawl round the ... t, and a nose of the colour of a bottle of rum ... the sun.

The old fagot was beginning to tumble about, ... water foamed on the deck, and the launch of ... surge at the staggering bow would strike a ... ble sheet of spume over the forestay, and then it ... in cataractal thunder. Hardy shut the deck- ... door. He was something more than uneasy. ... alarming situation drove all thought of the ... der of it out of his head. If it came on harder ... a heavy sea ran, would this old sieve hold ... ther? would the deck-house cling to the deck? ... hat would they do aboard the *York?* Candy was ... d and she was without a navigator. The boat- ... n was a good practical seaman, and in him lay ... rdy's hope. The boatswain was not the man to ... ndon the mate and the girl if he could help it. ... suppose the ship was blown away so that when ... weather cleared the brig was not in sight, what

would, or rather, what *could,* the boatswain do? He had not the navigator's art, and might not therefore know how to pick the brig up. Their condition was frightful; the lazarette was awash; he could not seek food in flooded timber. He sat down beside the girl.

"I cannot realise that you are with me," she said.

Her dress was damp, and raindrops sparkled upon her face and hair. He drew out his handkerchief, which lay dry in his pocket, and softly passed it over her face and hair. She was loving him with her eyes. Never did human passion make the eyes of a woman more beautiful.

"You must be starving," he said.

"No, the captain brought some food and water."

"Tell me where it is," he cried, starting to his feet.

She told him where the breaker was and the glass, and the parcel of provisions. He rushed out. The contents of the breaker could not be hurt by the flying brine and rain; and mercifully the provisions had been so placed that the breaker and the planks between which the captain had placed them kept them dry.

Hardy ran into the deck-house with the food, put the glass in his pocket, and returned again with the breaker, from which only two or three drinks had been drawn.

"Thank God for this!" said he, and he felt almost happy.

She had but little knowledge of the sea, and could not interpret their condition to the full of its tragic significance. Her heart was almost joyous because

her sweetheart was at her side; though death was hovering over that reeling fabric, its shadow was not upon her spirit. She was rescued by the man she loved from the horrors of loneliness on the wide sea, from imaginations which had been excited in her by those two mysterious strokes on the bell, and by her horrible association with a madman. The brig reeled and groaned to the sweep of the strong wind in the canvas, which was like to stream from the yards in hairs of cloth if the weather hardened. Again and again Hardy left the girl's side to step on deck and see how it was. The sky was a yellowish thickness down to within a mile, out of which the flying comber flashed, and the scene was a giddy pantomime of racing seas. This old bucket of brig was taking it gallantly over her bows. Hardy went forward to see if the only boat survived, and found her sitting secure, seized to eye-bolts, and ready for turning over and launching by tackles when the weather permitted.

This comforted him, and he stepped into the little caboose which some lee sea might hurl into the scuppers at any moment. Here, to his great delight, in a drawer he found some twenty or thirty ship's biscuits, a bottle half-full of rum, and a large piece of boiled pork on a tin dish; he also found a black-handled knife and fork on a shelf where stood a row of china plates, one of which he took down.

With this booty, half pocketed and half in arms, he returned to the deck-house, at whose door the girl had stood waiting for him, and spite of the flying brine, and the sickly reel of the half-foundered brig, and the thunder of the wind aloft, and their own dreadful situation, the vision of Bax's

farm rose before his mind's eye as he saw her standing in that door in the old incomparable posture, the straw hat slightly cocked, the head a little on one side, the left hand on the hip.

CHAPTER XIV.

HARD WEATHER

HARDY carefully put away the good things he had discovered, and then made a pork sandwich with biscuits, and poured out a little rum which he mingled with water, and they both made a meal.

Had she been alone she would have been dying of fear; her lover was with her, and the sea had no terrors. They talked as they ate.

"I foresaw heavy weather," said he, "but not the loss of three men. We shall lose the ship, I fear; there are no signs of the weather clearing. My God! how this beast wallows! Why, you'd think the sun had burst out!"

For just then the air was whitened by a great sheet of water.

"If the boat forward is carried away—" He checked himself, and then continued, "If we lose the *York* we shall be picked up by something else. These old north-countrymen are born to live."

"I am seeing life on the ocean," said Julia, smiling at him.

"Why, it has come as thick as cockroaches," he answered. "When you get home you shall write your story, and the critics who take shipping on a summer day from Putney to Henley will exclaim as one man, 'What a lie!'"

"Who rang the bell?" said Julia. "That question will worry me whilst I live."

A sea struck the deck-house and blinded the weather-windows. The sturdy structure quivered. Hardy waited until the water had roared away overboard, and then said:

"A bell will strike of itself in a rolling ship. I have heard it. Or it was hit by a rope. Do you believe in ghosts, Julia?"

"I don't want to."

"The stroke was a sudden come-to in the reel of the brig, or a rope did it," said Hardy, and she tried to look as though she believed him.

Thus they talked whilst they sat in the deck-house, for out of it they would have stood to be washed overboard. The seas poured in gray-green folds, and the foam rolled about the decks like the cream of the breaker on shelving sand. She was a stout bucket and strongly knit, and if all had been well with her she would have sported with this breeze. Her canvas was setting her to the eastwards broadside on, and Hardy was glad of it, because he guessed that the *York* would remain hove to, and that her drift would not be much greater than the sag of this half-drowned Geordie.

But though he looked abroad he never witnessed any signs of improvement, or even promise of improvement, in the weather. It was not blowing harder, however, which was a good thing, yet he guessed that even if the weight of the wind remained as it stood, then, should it blow all night, a fair daybreak would not reveal the *York,* in which case they were shipwrecked, and must either wait to be taken off, or trust to God's mercy to keep

the boat in her place forward, that they might launch her, and seek the succour that would not come. The deck-house was often hit by the sea, but the blows were rarely hard, and there was more terror in the thunder of the stroke than in the possibility of the structure going.

"I see a scuttle-butt out there," said he once during the course of the morning.

"What's that?" she asked.

"A cask for holding fresh water for the men to drink when on deck."

He stepped out, got under the rail, and crept to the scuttle-butt with the foam about his feet. The dipper hung by a sling; he dropped it through the hole and brought it up full, and tasting it found it fairly sweet, sweet enough for human necessity. He added security to the cask by further lashings, and covered the hole to protect the water from the flying salt, then crept back through the foam to the side of his sweetheart, first sending the sight of a falcon piercing the rain-swept obscurity of the quarter in which he guessed the *York* was lying hove to. But all was the confusion of the headlong surge, raging in frequent collision, the stormy stare of motionless vapour, the wink of the sea-flash within the veil of haze, and the universal groaning of old ocean when that grim Boatswain, the Gale, whitens her back with the thongs of his cat.

About midday they made another meal off pork sandwiches, a godsend to the poor creatures. As the time went by and the weather held as before, the sense of shipwreck grew keener and keener in Hardy. Not so with the girl; compared to what might have been, this wallowing lump of brig, filled

with timber, straining afloat, was paradise. But Hardy did not much relish the notion of having to take to that boat yonder. He could see that with the yard-arm tackle which he would find she was to be easily got on to her keel, and hoisted out of it by the little winch just before the main-mast.

It might prove a job, for his shipmate was a girl; yet much harder jobs, girl or no girl, were to be got through at sea. But until the weather calmed he could not think of the boat, and if the weather did calm and left the brig afloat, which was very probable, and he managed to launch the boat, then, bethinking him of Julia and himself in that small squab fabric, his heart grew cold; because next to the raft the open boat in mid-ocean is the greatest desperation of the sailor. Nearly every chapter of its romance is a tragedy. One dies and is buried, one goes mad and springs overboard to drink of the crystal fountain which is gushing in the sweet valley just there. Another is hollow-eyed with famine, and the gaunt cheeks work with the movement of the jaw upon the piece of lead or the die of boot-leather, which helps the saliva. Hardy knew it all, had tasted some of it, and he could not think of Julia and that little open boat and the flawless horizon, more pitiless to the wrecked mariner than the cordon of soldiers to the famished city, without feeling his heart turn cold.

And now happened something which I fear the reader will think more incredible than any other incident in this volume.

After talking a little while together, these two *people* rose from their chairs and knelt down in

prayer. Hardy believed in God and in the mercy of God, and so did Julia, and he asked God in the simple language of the plain English seaman's heart to protect them and be with them, and he thanked him for the mercy he had already vouchsafed; and depend upon it no British sailor will consider this an unnatural act on the part of Hardy, because always the proudest heart of oak in the hour of triumph, the most depressed heart of oak in the hour of trial, has been accustomed to look up to God and thank or beseech him, for it is he who shares the loneliness of the seaman on the wide, wide sea.

But let me assure the reader, also, that lovers do not make love in shipwreck as they do under the awning of the passenger liner, or in the bower of roses ashore. Death is too near to allow passion to expend itself in the form made familiar by the novel. Their talk often went to Captain Layard and the amazing cunning he had exhibited in inventing the trap they had all fallen into.

"I believe," said Hardy, "only two are dead on board. He had a book to give them the doses, and his brain was clearly equal to understanding what it said. But would the rum absorb all the poison? Would not one man get more than his whack? A few grains more would have done for us all. The beggar took care not to drink himself, and none of us thought of asking him to."

"How did you feel when you awoke?" she asked.

"Much as you did, I expect," he answered.

But talking was not very easy in this interior. The water, sheeting against the deck-house, seethed through speech and confounded it. There was the thunder of the fallen sea forward, and the mes

municable maledictions of a sodden brig in the trough filled the gale with bewilderment as it flew. Every fabric afloat has a voice of her own, and like her sailors, she knows how to swear when injured.

In the course of the afternoon Hardy stepped into the after-berths, but found nothing to reward his search. The papers of an old timberman are uninteresting; the letters of an auld wife of Sunderland to her Geordie are sacred, and saving three or four clay pipes and some tobacco, for which Hardy was grateful, there was little to be seen worth mentioning. If this gale slackened into moderate weather the girl should sleep in one of these berths; if not, near the door in the interior on the best sort of bed he could contrive, because, as he meant to keep watch and watch himself throughout the night, she would be close by to rescue if some thunderous surge should discharge the deck-house from its obligation of sticking. He had searched for candles and had found none; a few boxes of matches were in a sort of desk fixed to the bulkhead near the bunk. So he came out of the captain's berth with an old mattress, and then he brought some wearing apparel, a heavy coat with big horn buttons, and a pair of north-country breeches, which, if seized to a stay for fresh air, might fill up and stand out like the half of a Dutchman in a jump.

"What's all that for?" said Julia.

He explained, and she loved him, and thought how good he was.

Yes, there are even worse conditions of life to a girl than being shipwrecked with a sailor who *is* a gentleman, and if the gentleman informs the

spirit of a sailor, its impulse is never greater than when it responds to the appeal of a girl's helplessness.

He cut up a little tobacco and smoked a pipe. It seemed to bring him within hail of civilisation, and Julia enjoyed the smell of the tobacco-smoke immensely, and said it made her think of her father.

"How would he relish this picture?" said he, referring to their situation.

"He would not like to be here, that is all he would think. Will this brig keep together, do you fancy?"

"Oh, yes, and I'll tell you what—the gale doesn't harden, which is a good sign. There was plenty of weather in the moon last night, but in these parts it is not often long-lived."

"Is not a tremendous sea running?" she asked.

"Yes, from the Ramsgate or Margate Sands point of view. You must go to about fifty-eight south, right off the Horn, and get amongst the ice to know what a tremendous sea is like. They come like the cliffs of Dover at you, and the deck is up and down, whilst the keel sweeps up the acclivity. It is splendid and frightful. I was hove to for a fortnight down there; we couldn't drive clear of the ice, and we had about four hours of daylight to see by. All the devils in hell raved in our rigging as we sat upright a breathless instant on the amazing peak we had climbed. No, Julia, this is not a tremendous sea, and the brig will hang together and outweather twenty such."

The vessel, however, was acting as though she considered it a tremendous sea. Had she been dismasted or a steamer her behaviour could not have

been worse. Her sails a little steadied her, but her rollings and motions and plungings and heavings were sickening and insufferable, because she was nearly full of water. She had no buoyancy and the seas made a rock of her, and often sprang in green sheets right over her — a wet and yelling game of leap-frog.

Late in the afternoon, when it was almost dark, one of these seas filled the caboose and swept it to leeward, where it lay stranded. The outcry of hurled ironmongery, of crashing china, of skipping knives and forks, pot, kettles, and pans, along with the noise of the splintering caboose, was enough to make Hardy think that the brig was scattering under their feet. The girl grasped his hand when that sea came and the galley went; she thought it was all over with them. Hardy kept his thoughts to himself: his real anxiety was in the boat, which might be washed overboard or dashed into staves, and in the deck-house, which was their only shelter.

Happily the old bucket had taken up her position on her own account, and it was chiefly the bows and amidships which got the drenches; it was seldom that the deck-house was struck by a sea whose weight was a menace.

"It is miserable to be without light at sea," said Hardy, "on a black night in heavy weather. But there is no lamp here and none in the berths, and if there was where should I find oil? We must face it through, Julia, and you must sleep."

"I have had more sleep than I want," replied Julia. "I shall not mind the darkness if the bell isn't struck."

"*It* may be struck by a rope, by nothing else.

If a ghost, how could an essence grasp substance? How could something you could walk through lift a knife or try and pull down a lamp-post?"

"I sha'n't like it if I hear it," she replied. "Oh, how dreadful to think of him washing about under us! Wretched man! You should have seen the unearthly expression of his face whilst he sat staring forward, waiting for the little drummer to appear."

"The great poet is true," said Hardy, who had fingered a few volumes in his day, albeit he was a sailor in the Merchant Service of England.

> "'For shapes which come not at an earthly call
> Will not depart when mortal voices bid;
> Lords of the visionary eye whose lid,
> Once raised, remains aghast and will not fall.'"

"Those words are true of that poor dead man," said Julia. "Aghast! you should have seen him when he turned up his eyes to God and prayed."

The afternoon closed into early evening, and it was as black as a wolf's throat at the hour of sundown. Through the windows you could see the light of the foam, sudden pallid glares, rushes of dim phosphoric gleams which merely made the darkness visible. The brig was a drunken vision, and the yells of her rigging might be likened to the screams of a tipsy slut who is being thrashed by her man in a thunder-storm.

The two sweethearts ate some biscuit, and Julia held a lighted match whilst Hardy mixed some rum and water for them both. They drank out of the same glass, and neither of them apologised. Then Hardy felt and wound up his watch, for he wanted

time, though he couldn't see it then except by striking a match. They sat together and I dare say he put his arm round her waist, and possibly she supported her head upon his shoulder after removing her hat.

It was a ticklish sitting-ground and they sometimes slided, which was a very good reason why Hardy should hold her by the waist, and why Julia should cling lovingly with her head. And in this posture they entered the night and passed perhaps a couple of hours, so that when Hardy struck a match he found the time nine.

He made for the mattress, felt and found it, and the north-country apparel which was to form the bedclothes. He then lurched back to Julia, who did not want to lie down, but he was her lord in resolution and her love consented.

Always groping, for despite the sea-flash it was inside here of a midnight blackness, he pillowed her head with a garment of north-country measurement, and then carefully covering her to the neck with the skipper's coat, he pressed his lips to the brow of the girl who was to be his wife, and who was therefore sacred to him, and bade her sleep and leave him to watch and nod and watch.

And now all that followed was sickening, sloppy, howling, reeling, foaming hours of darkness, with nothing in them but the drunken vision of brig, and the noisy rage of her straining heart. But at half-past three o'clock by Hardy's watch the weather was undoubtedly moderating; by five it was blowing a little fresh; by six it was daylight and the wind northeast, a pleasant breeze, and the green sea rolled in foamless swells, cutting the wake of the sun,

which shone brightly out of every blue lagoon 'twixt the clouds.

The girl was up and sitting at the table. She had slept a little, but that little was sound and good. Hardy brought the telescope out of the berth: it was a poor glass, but you could see more through it than with the naked eye. The brig was rolling ponderously on the swell, whose heave was sometimes too sudden for her, and she would stagger with a scream of white water from her side. Her canvas was blowing out, and the sodden old cask may have had some way on her.

Hardy stepped out and looked for the *York*. Had he looked for St. Paul's Cathedral he could not have seen less of it. The ship was not in sight and he fetched a deep breath, for either her crew had abandoned him and Julia to what sailors would know might prove a terrible death, or the ship's drift had been faster than he had allowed for.

"She's not in sight," he shouted to Julia, then sprang into the main-shrouds, put his telescope over the rim of the top, and got into the top.

She was not in sight from the top and he crawled as high as the cross-trees, and she was not in sight from that elevation. Nothing was in sight but the horizon, which wound eel-like to the flashing clasp of the sun upon it.

He regained the deck and put the telescope down and sat beside Julia.

"What shall we do?" she said, when he had given her the news.

"We will breakfast," he answered.

And forthwith he made biscuit sandwiches of the pork, of which there still remained a good lump, a

godsend. There was nothing much to elate him in the sight of the boat still safely lashed to the deck; he feared the open boat in mid-ocean with few provisions, little water, and an everlasting menace of weather, for blow it will if it does not blow now, and what sort of a time would they have had afloat in that boat last night?

Julia dredged her lover's face with her eyes but could not make out what was passing in his mind, because he himself did not know what was passing there.

"We must husband our stores," said he, "and wait for something to sight us."

Saying which he rose and stepped up a little ladder on to the top of the deck-house, directed by sailorly instincts to what he wanted, and there it was securely lashed to the iron stanchions of the low rail — a flag-locker. He opened it and took out the Red Ensign and carried it right aft, and bent it union down to the peak signal-halliards and hoisted it half-mast high, a signal of deep distress and death. Its rippling noise was pleasant, but the look of it was ghastly with its dumb appeal to a pitiless sea.

Julia stood beside him and sank her clear gaze far into the recesses of the ocean, and saw the sea line working and nothing more.

"Let's go and see if the galley has betrayed any secrets of food," said he.

The sluggish roll of the brig was no hindrance to feet accustomed to the bounding deck. They found the galley murdered; it was split and shivered, but the coppers to the stroke of the sea that slung them had spewed out a big lump of beef and a bolster of duff — the sailors' pudding — composed of dark

flour and slush with here and there a currant, but not always. Hardy pounced upon the food as the adjutant lights upon the floating Hindoo.

"They left their dinner behind them," he said. "Good God! what a noble haul. Here is enough for a week with care."

"Is it cooked?"

He answered this question by pulling out his knife and cutting off a piece of the meat. Another half-hour would have cooked it, but it was eatable to human necessity.

He stowed this provender away in the deck-house and filled the breaker from the scuttle-butt, then went with Julia to look at the bell.

"You did not hear it last night," he said.

"No," she answered.

"It shall not trouble you again," said he, and he unhooked it, and threw it down.

"But who struck it?" she asked.

"He'll not strike it again," he answered.

He peeped through the forescuttle and saw nothing but the gleam of black water washing below.

"The rats don't like this sort of thing," said he. "Can you pull upon a rope, Julia?"

"I am as strong as you," she answered.

He smiled with a glance at her beautiful figure, and said:

"Turn to, then, and lend me a hand to shorten sail."

Between them they manned the necessary buntlines and clewlines, and Julia dragged as handsomely as her sweetheart.

"Give us a song, George, for time," she said, and

he started "Chillyman," which sea-air Julia had caught from hearing it on board the *Glamis Castle,* and her voice threaded his like the notes of a flute.

"Randy dandy, heigh-ho!
Chillyman!
Pull for a shilling, heigh-ho!
Chillyman!"[1]

In fact, you may put any words you like to these sea-tunes, and the sailors will pull the better if you damn the eyes of the quarter-deck in rhyme.

Hardy next thoroughly overhauled the brig, so far as perception of her condition was possible. He could not see why she should not hold together through twenty such gales as roared over her last night. He stood with Julia looking at their only boat, beside which there lay, as though placed by some angel of mercy, a watch-tackle. The sight of that watch-tackle sank him into contemplation, and Julia gazed at him whilst he thought. How weary were the motions of the brig upon that sulky sweep of swell! Yet the fine figure of the girl swayed to it with the graceful ease of a figurehead curtseying at the bow. She was shipwrecked, she was in a dreadful situation of peril, this time to-morrow she might be floating in the sea a corpse, and yet never on board the Indiaman, on board the *York*, or at home had she felt happier. She was loving him passionately and he was always with her, and she could not but be happy.

Presently he said:

"I will tell you how it can be done when it needs

[1] Sailors' word for "cheerly men."

to be done. She is a small boat and not heavy, and you and I will cant her on to her bilge with handspikes, then I'll hook that watch-tackle to a strop round the foremost thwart and take the hauling part to the winch, and rouse her along to abreast of the gangway. That gangway there unships, and we sit low upon the sea, and we'll tumble the boat through the gangway overboard, smack-fashion. If she proves too heavy we'll rig out a spar" — here he cast his eyes round — "with the watch-tackle made fast to her, and the winch will do the rest. Yes, that is my scheme if it should come to it. Meanwhile let us be patient and keep a lookout for ships."

But the imprisonment on board this abandoned hull of Mr. George Hardy and Miss Julia Armstrong was to continue until the dawn of three days, counting from Hardy's time of finding the girl. All this while it was very fine weather, and of a night they would sit on top of the deck-house whilst Hardy smoked and Julia prattled. They watched the sea lights which glittered upon the black breast of the ocean; they watched the flight of the meteor. They talked of the stars, which nowhere wheel in so much splendour as over the sea, and of the great Spirit who controls their flight. Morally they were the least shipwrecked of people. They were happy in each other's company; if either one had been alone it might have proved madness to him or to her, but the voice of love, the presence of love even in the gloom of calamity, made a light of their own which was as inspiriting as the hope that springs eternal. It was not strange that no ships ever showed a white rag of canvas, a coil of sooty smoke upon the horizon in any point of the compass, because the brig

sat low and her "dip" would be small, and a ship may be within the compass of a boat-race and yet not be seen. Hardy often went aloft and searched the waters; he did not lose heart, because he felt sure that something must heave in sight sooner or later, and meanwhile with great care the food they had would last them a week or perhaps longer, and there was fresh water for a fortnight or perhaps longer; for I am telling you what I have heard, and like the tramp in Dickens's sketch, my squire "would not tell a lie for no man."

Hardy was also sure that the brig would hold together, and being of the careless nature of the sailor, though provident, willing, and sober, he would not allow his spirits to be depressed, and he had eyes enough in his head to see that Julia regarded their perilous condition as something in the way of an outing — to be enjoyed. She was a fine girl and we are never weary of admiring her. I have told you that she was not pretty, but her face, what with the cock of her head, the hand on the hip, the speaking appeal of her eyes, carried such a character of romance that it not only interested you at once, when she looked at you full and fastened her eyes upon yours with her slight smile, it made you even think her pretty, and certainly the truest beauty of a woman's face comes into it from her mind.

Then broke the dawn of the third day, and Hardy, who had been sleeping since three, awoke and stepped out of the deck-house, and with the brig's telescope in hand climbed the few steps and searched the sea. It was again a fine morning; *the heavens* were lofty with their freckling of sta-

tionary small cloud; the wind was a light breeze a little to the north of east; and the sea, which streamed in thin lifts, sparkled to the caress of a hand that could make it roar when it thought fit.

Suddenly into the lenses of the glass there entered a full-rigged ship, showing nothing but three single-reefed topsails and a foresail and the trembling line of her hull a little above the horizon. "A full-rigged ship under that sail in this weather!" thought Hardy. "By heaven, it must be the *York*, and if so she is abandoned!"

CHAPTER XV.

ABOARD AGAIN

THE sun was floating over the horizon, and the pink of his glory was melting into the flash of silver, as the wake of the *York* streamed in a short white gleam upon the sea. The light breeze was still to the north of east, and thither it had hung for hours past. Hardy and Julia stood at the brig's rail watching the ship that was distinct and lifting in the ocean's recess.

"Is it possible that she's the *York?*" said Julia.

He answered with the telescope at his eye:

"Don't I know her! She's under single reefs. Her spanker is furled, and her head sails keep her off, as though she were under control. Perhaps she is, but I don't think so. She would head directly for us if she had anything alive on board, because I can hold the line of her rail in this glass, and if I can see her, she can see me."

"What will you do?"

"I will wait a little longer and see if she is manned. If her crew have deserted her, I will launch that boat, and board her before she drifts out of sight."

"Will you be able to catch her?"

"Catch her! Can you row?"

"Try me," she answered, with the proud look a girl will put on when she feels she is of importance.

"She is drifting at about two, and we will make that boat buzz three, and perhaps more. But if she is manned, she will come alongside, and our getting aboard will be easy. But she is not manned, I am sure," said Hardy. "Pipe to breakfast, Julia."

This time they made beef sandwiches of biscuit, and they were swallowed without the accompanying forecastle growl. Indeed, considering it was meant for sailors' use, the beef was not very bad, and as it was pickled to the heart, a little cooking had gone a long way to make it almost food for the human stomach. The bottle of rum was half full and they drank a little of the liquor, largely diluted with water. To refresh himself Hardy went to the head, where he knew he would find a pump which stood clear of the deck load. He picked up a bucket, carried it to the pump and filled it with sparkling brine, and purified his face with the cold salt-sweetness of the water and wrung his hands in it, and felt that his beard was growing, for shipwreck does not stop the growth of hair, as we see when a haggard crew steps ashore out of a life-boat.

And all the time he kept his eyes fastened on the *York,* as he knew her to be. When he went aft he found Julia sitting on a chair on top of the deck-house. He mounted the steps and sat beside her with the telescope, for he had made up his mind to wait a little before launching the boat.

"What makes you know that she's the *York?*" she asked.

"Twenty points, and you must have served two years before the mast to understand them if I

explained. She *is* the *York*, my love, and with God's eye watching us we shall be aboard her and safe before sunset."

"Hurrah!" cried Julia, and she picked up his hand and kissed it.

It was a thing to be settled in about an hour, and in that hour Hardy discovered that she was not under control by her coming to windward and her falling off; and when she came to windward she hung so long that Hardy thought it time to turn to. And now began a process of which the description shall not weary you.

First he unshipped the gangway and fetched some capstan bars for rollers; he then passed his knife through the boat's lashings, took the watch-tackle and secured it to a fore-shroud abreast of the boat, overhauled the tackle to hook the block on the boat's gunwale, then he and Julia clapped on to the hauling part of the tackle and easily roused the little wagon on to her bilge. She was not very much heavier than a smack's boat; her oars were lashed under the thwarts, and her rudder had been on a thwart and now lay in her. They tried to run her along the deck, but though they started her the toil must prove too great for the girl who would be plying an oar shortly. So he carried the block of the watch-tackle as far forward as its length would allow him and made a strop with a piece of gear round the thwart, to which he hooked the other block, bent a line on to the hauling part and carried it to the winch, giving Julia the job of hauling the slack in as he wound.

He wound lustily, for he was fighting for life and time and he was a very strong man, and had entirely

rid himself of all the evil effects of the drug, as the girl had. So they brought the boat abreast of the gangway; he had muscle enough to lift her bow whilst Julia placed a skid, in the shape of a capstan bar, under her forefoot; he made other skids of the capstan bars, and laying hold of her gunwales on either side, the two brave hearts, with the boat's nose pointing to the sea, ran the fabric, secured by a painter hitched to a main shroud, clean through the gangway, and she fell with a squash, and floated like an empty bottle with never a drop of water in her.

This done, Hardy, who was making haste, for the *York* was keeping a rap-full and forging into the stream of sunshine, though always coming for the brig, seized a line, and watching his chance sprang into the boat, secured the line to her after-thwart, leapt aboard, and brought the boat broadside to the gangway.

The roll of the brig was very sullen and slow, and the swell of the sea sometimes hove the boat flush with the brig's waterway.

"You must jump into her, Julia," said Hardy, "and for God's sake don't go overboard. To provide against that, see here."

He took an end of main-royal-halliards and hitched it round her waist, and overhauled some slack which he grasped.

"Pull up your clothes," said he, "and free your legs and aim for the bottom of the boat, and jump when I sing out."

The little squab structure came floating up, and Hardy brought her in by a tug of the after-rope as she was coming.

"Jump!" he shouted.

And that girl, whose heart was of British oak, holding her clothes to her knees, sprang, and in a few breaths was sitting on a thwart and liberating herself from the rope, whilst she smiled up at her lover.

"Now, Julia," said he, "I am going to send you down the provisions and water. Stand by to receive them, but keep seated."

He handed the telescope to her, then fetched the breaker, which she received as it lay in that instant of heaving swell on the rim of the gunwale, and she rolled it to the thwart, then to the stern-sheets, taking the glass from Hardy at the next heave. He made one parcel of the provisions and hove them into the boat, then casting the painter adrift he jumped into the boat, let go the remaining line that held her, cut loose the oars, shipped the thole-pins, leaving the rudder unshipped, and made Julia the bow oar.

Could she row? Very well indeed; but the oars were a little heavy and she did not attempt to feather; in fact, she rowed like a smacksman, lifting the blade with its streaming glory of water on high, but the dip and thrust of it was that of a stout schoolboy, and between them they made the boat buzz, Hardy, with larger power of oar, keeping her straight for the *York*.

"Don't tire yourself," said he; "rest when you like. She'll not outrun us."

"What a wonderful thing to happen!" said Julia, whose face was whitening with the ardour of her toil.

She looked at nothing but her oar, and was certainly not going to be tired this side the *York*.

"At sea, where all is wonderful, nothing is wonderful," said Hardy. "Any sailor would easily see how this has come about. But don't waste your breath in talking: let us row."

It was a strange and curious picture: a man and a girl in a little open boat, pulling away for a ship that was rounding into the wind as though she knew they were approaching, whilst astern receded the figure of the brig, a melancholy sight, despite the gun-flashes of sunshine which burst from her side at every roll; her hanging canvas flapped a mournful farewell to the rowers, who took no heed of the poor thing's tender and, for a north-countryman, graceful salutation of good-bye. But, then, she had been a stage of maniacal horrors, of death, of the lonely little ghost that struck the bell, of shipwreck with its stalking shadows of famine, thirst, and the calenture that invites you to die.

Hardy frequently turned to look at the *York* so as to keep a true course, and this time saw that she was involved in the wind, and was waiting for him to come aboard to tell her what to do. They had four miles to measure, and as they pulled with the spirit of shipwreck in their pulse they were within hail of her in an hour.

No man showed himself; she was abandoned. But suddenly on the forecastle rail appeared the forepaws and magnificent head of a great Newfoundland dog. He barked deep and long.

"Poor Sailor," said Hardy; "I had forgotten him."

"How inhuman to leave him," said Julia, panting.

"A few more strokes, sweetheart," shouted Hardy, "and we are free. What a noble girl

you are! What a good wife you will make a sailor!"

"I will make you a good wife, never fear," she answered, joyous in despite distress of breath.

The ship's head was slowly paying off as the boat's stem struck the side. Hardy secured the painter and jumped into the mizzen-chains.

"Hold out your hands," he exclaimed, "and jump when the boat lifts," and to the lift and to his fearless, muscular haul she sprang, and was alongside of him.

He grasped her by the arm, passed her round the rigging, and helped her over the bulwark rail. The dog was barking in fury of joy. When they gained the deck he sprang upon the girl in love and delight and nearly knocked her down.

"Get him some water and biscuit whilst I look about me," said Hardy.

He had long ago known by the help of the telescope that the ship was abandoned because two pairs of davits were empty, and with the perception of a sailor he understood that the crew had transferred themselves to another ship in one boat, whereas if they had abandoned the ship on their own account, which was improbable, they would have gone away in three companies, and the davits would have been like gibbets, since the after-boat had been used by the captain when he stole the girl.

The wheel was not lashed, and was constantly playing in swift revolution to starboard and port and back again. Hardy judged that the dog had been left by the men because the faithful creature would not quit the ship which had been his master's home, and the men, who would have had very little

time, did not choose that their flesh should be torn by using violence. Yet it was cruel of them to leave him, for they would know that the noble creature would soon need water and food, and perish as lamentably as a famine-stricken sailor on a raft.

He saw that the figures of Mr. Candy and the man at the wheel, which had been concealed by a tarpaulin, were gone; they had of course been buried. Julia looked after the dog, that was lapping water thankfully as she filled a bowl from the galley with fresh water out of the scuttle-butt. Hardy slowly went forward, carefully gazing about him.

No man lay dead on the deck; he dropped into the forecastle and found it empty of human life, so that the captain's birthday had killed but two men, which was surely wonderful, for he had commanded a power that could have murdered a thousand.

Why was not this fine ship taken possession of by the people who had received her crew? I will tell you at once, for the story came out on the men's arrival. Her drift had been swifter, with the helping hand of the surge, than Hardy could have imagined or allowed for, and in the morning of the gale she was close aboard a French brig that was hove to sitting deep in the sea. They hailed her and were answered. They stated they were without a navigator and they didn't know what to do. The French captain spoke English, and said he would receive them if they came aboard in their own boat and land them at Marseilles, the port he was bound to. The weather was then moderating, and after calling a council the boatswain, giving the mate and the girl up as lost, swiftly decided, with the heedlessness of seamen, to abandon the *York,* and with great

difficulty the sailors gained the deck of the brig, leaving their clothes behind them. Very shortly afterward the French captain braced his yards round and shaped a course for Marseilles, leaving nothing alive on board the *York* but the dog.

This is the true story of the ship's adventure, and whoever questions it is no sailor.

Hardy left the forecastle and stood awhile on deck near the hatch, gazing aloft. In this moment he was fired by a resolution which would have inspired no other heart than that of a true British sailor. He determined that he and the girl and the dog should save this fine ship without help, and carry her to England, and entitle them to a reward which should prove a living to them whilst they endured. His face, which was as manly as Tom Bowline's, was irradiated by the glory of this resolution as he gazed aloft, smiling. It was possible — and being possible it was to be done. But it needed doing by two hearts of oak and the dog as a lookout, and great anxiety would accompany the discharge of this splendid duty, much sleeplessness and ceaseless urging of the spirit. But the eye of God would dwell lovingly upon their toil and peril; he felt that and raised his cap to the thought, and he said to himself, in the language of Nelson, "When we cannot do all we wish, we must do as well as we can!"

He walked aft and joined the girl.

"Julia," he said, "I have formed the resolution of my life, and if I can fulfil it we shall be rich, though that will not make us happy."

"What is it?" she asked, looking a little frightened, with her head slightly drooped to the shoulder, and her left hand, white as foam, reposing like a

coronet upon the Newfoundland's head. Indeed, what with the mad captain, drugs, and ghosts she was in such a condition of mind that she was easily alarmed by any divergence from the commonplace.

"This is a valuable ship," he answered. "I know her cargo, for I helped to stow it. She has a beautiful hull, and is perfectly sound aloft. In addition to her cargo she carries a little treasure of jewelry consigned to Melbourne — Colonials love jewelry. I dare say it is worth ten thousand pounds. It is in a safe in the captain's cabin. I should say that the value of this ship and cargo is between sixty thousand and seventy thousand pounds, perhaps more. Julia, you and I and the dog will carry her home. We shall be richly rewarded by the owners and the underwriters — in fact, it is a matter of salvage to be assessed if my terms are disputed."

She grasped him by both hands, her eyes were on fire, her cheeks were burning, the spirit of delight and resolution filled her romantic face with the light of conquest and realisation.

"Is it to be done?" she said.

"It is done," he answered. "We don't talk of failure. But let us make ourselves comfortable whilst the weather is fine."

"How heavenly!" she sighed. "You will teach me to steer, George."

"I will teach you everything that is proper for a young woman to know," he answered.

He took her to his heart and pressed his lips to hers, which was like signing articles: that lip pressure was the seal of their agreement to serve each other loyally, and to eat the food on board *without growling.*

The first thing they did was to go below. Here was the cabin just as they had left it; there was the chair in which Captain Layard had sat and talked metaphysics, yonder was the locker on which the drugged girl had slept, and they stood on the deck where Hardy had lifted his cannon-ball of a head, whilst his bewildered soul groped slowly into his brains. They went into the captain's cabin and saw the drum and the drumsticks and the little bedstead.

"What a fantasy of the sea!" said Hardy. "It is beyond me. It is like a vision, sensible to perception and unreal to it. Will our story be credited?"

"Who cares?" answered the girl. "Is that the safe, George?"

"Yes, and I'll look for the key by and by. The jewelry's there."

The safe was small and secured on a massive timber shelf, but though small it was large enough to contain the Koh-i-noor, and to hold buried the wealth and jewels of a rajah.

Hardy cast a keen look around him, saw that the table held the necessary machinery of navigation, carefully wound up the chronometers, which had not stopped, then went into his own cabin whilst the girl entered hers. When they presently met they sought for food and found plenty in the pantry; here were ham and tongue, palatable stuff in tins, white biscuits, and pots of jam.

They sat down and ate, and the Newfoundland sat beside them, triumphant in this familiar company of man and woman, and Julia, who loved him, saw that he made a good breakfast.

"How are we to manage it, George?" she asked.

"It will require some scheming," he answered, "but we must not accept help, because if we do our salvage share will shrink out of all proportion to our merits. Can you steer in the least?"

"I can steer a boat, but not a ship," Julia answered.

"I will teach you; you will get the art in a very few lessons."

"One lesson will do if I have the strength."

"Oh," he answered, with a loving glance at her, "you are one of those English girls whose shapes of beauty are wire-rigged. Wire is stronger than hemp, though it looks delicate. What your strength can't do I have arms for."

"So you have," she replied; "you are the manliest sailor that ever was."

"Let us change the subject," he replied, with a little colour of pleasure in his face, for a compliment from your sweetheart is next to a kiss. "We are fortunate in finding the ship under very easy sail. We'll get some more fore-and-aft canvas upon her, for it is easily hauled down, but I shall leave the square canvas that is furled to rest as it is. I'll bring her to her course at noon when I find out where we are. You will light the galley fire, as we shall want a hot drink. But we need little cooking, for if we boil a good lump of beef, that, with the food in the pantry, will last you and me and the dog five hundred miles of sea."

"Are we near England?"

"Not very, I think, but I shall know presently exactly how near we are."

"How shall we get rest, George? We must sleep or die, or worse, go mad."

"Aye," he answered, thoughtfully; "you see things rightly, but we must not make sleep a difficulty."

"The rest seems quite easy," she said, joyously; "and I shall learn to steer in one lesson."

They left the table and went on deck, followed by the dog, who growled softly and often in a sort of undertalk with himself. There is a great nature in a Newfoundland, and you often wonder whilst you look into his soft, affectionate eyes what his thoughts are.

It was a glowing scene of forenoon ocean. The ripple ran with the laughter of the summer in its voice. The endless procession of humps of swell, as though old ocean was perpetually shrugging his shoulders over spiteful memories, brought the flaming banners of the sun out of the east, and swept them westwards in knightly array of fiery plume and foam-crested summit. Four miles off wallowed the poor little brig, tearfully flapping her pocket-handkerchief to the naked horizon, and by mute and pathetic gesture coaxing nothing into being to help her. Many soft, white clouds floated westwards, and Hardy noticed that the glass was high and those clouds meant nothing but vapour.

What a noble ship to be in charge of, to virtually be the owner of, to rescue from the toils of the sea, to witness in security in some harbour of England, flying high the commercial flag of the Empire in token of British supremacy, even in the hour of peril, when the Foreigner would consider all was lost!

"It is not yet twelve o'clock," said Hardy, "and we will light the galley fire."

They walked forward and entered the sea kitchen. Plenty of chopped wood lay stacked. The ship's cook had been a man of foresight, and anticipated labour by putting an axe into the ordinary seaman's hand; also near the wood stood two buckets of coal and a little heap on the deck. There was plenty of coal in the fore-peak for a voyage to Australia. Hardy had matches, which are curiosities at sea in a forecastle, for you light your pipe at the galley fire with rope yarns or shavings, and the slush lamp is kindled by the binnacle or side-light. But aft there are usually matches, because the cabin is the home of elegance, refinement, and luxury, and the captain must have matches, for he cannot light his cigar at the sailors' fire. Hardy first explored the coppers; they were empty. He filled them from the scuttle-butt; why should he use salt water when there was plenty of fresh at hand? Fresh water would cleanse the mahogany beef of something of its brine, and perhaps soften it into complacent recognition of human digestion.

Then the fire was lighted; he could not find the key of the harness cask, so he fetched a weapon from the carpenter's chest, and the staples yielded to his blow with the shriek of lacerated wood. There was plenty of beef and pork in the cask, buried in the horrible crystal in which lurks the demon of scurvy; he turned the pieces over, and selecting the fattest and least ill-looking lump, dropped it into the copper for boiling when the water should begin.

This work, easily recited, cost time. Before he touched a brace or put the ship to her course he must find out where she was. The last entries in the log-book were in his handwriting, and they

related the story of the captain's birthday, how he kept it, and his disappearance with a young lady passenger named Julia Armstrong. The latitude was then — N. and the longitude — W. But the drifting ship had measured miles, and her captain must know where he was. This he would find out in about an hour.

The sow under the long-boat was dead. To get rid of it before the carcass stank he stropped it and clapped the watch-tackle on it, and together they hauled the little mountain of what might have proved tooth-alluring crackling and white fresh fat, always sweet at sea, through the open gangway overboard. It fell without a prayer, and the fish that nosed it that day dined well.

Some of the poultry in the hen-coops were dead; a few lived, and craved with fluttering red pennons for drink and grain. Of course Hardy knew "the ropes" of this ship and could lay his hand on anything he wanted. He filled the little troughs with fresh water, and no one but a beholder could have figured the profound gratitude with which the varying row of bills was lifted to heaven. He helped them to grain, and they filled their crops with all ardency of pecking. He cleared the hen-coop of its plumed corpses, and so they sweetened the ship forthwith.

It was about time that Hardy fetched his sextant: the soaring sun excited his impatience; he desired that the ship should be sending his sweetheart and himself home, and the ceaseless waving of those pocket-handkerchiefs just over the horizon teased him with their impertinence, and as a token of distress when the morning was fair and their hearts

high and hopeful. His reckoning found the ship's position within a mile or two of her place when he had left her to succour his darling.

"I have it now," said he, "and we must trim sail for home."

"Oh, how beautiful!" cried Julia, and the dog barked in recognition of the girl's triumphant note.

The ship was on the port tack and must be wore to the north. Hardy put the helm hard up and secured it, then let go the fore, main, and mizzen-braces, and the yards, as the ship obeyed her rudder, swung a little of themselves. With the starboard-braces let go Hardy and Julia did not find it difficult to swing the yards. The wind would be almost abeam when the ship was homeward bound, and there were the winch and the capstan to brace the yards well forward if the wind drew ahead.

"Sing out, George!" cried Julia. And they brought the fore and foretopsail-yard, with fore-tack and sheet all gone, round, to their chanty of "Chillyman."

"Randy dandy, heigho!
Chillyman!
Pull for a shilling, heigho!
Chillyman!
Young and willing, heigho!
Sweet and killing ole bo',
Dandy, heigho!
Chillyman!"

The Newfoundland looked on and grumbled because he had no hands. They got the main and the mizzen-yards round to the same song with some laughter, because Hardy put a few words of sweet-

ness into his invention as he sang, and the girl's voice was rich with appreciation as the flute of her lips swept the carol of her delight into his manly tones.

Then they saw to the fore-tack and sheet and to the jib-sheets, and the ship floated away steadily round in graceful salutations to the dejected handkerchiefs on the quarter. Hardy cast the wheel adrift and told the girl to hold it whilst he steadied the yards by hauling as taut as his pair of hands could the weather-braces of the fore and main and the lee-braces of the mizzen.

This done he stood beside Julia to teach her how to steer.

CHAPTER XVI.

PRACTICAL SEAMANSHIP

He is a lucky sailor to whom is granted the opportunity of teaching a girl with a romantic face and a beautiful figure the art of steering a full-rigged ship. Though the sailor is often in the company of ladies at sea, he is kept very severely forward, whilst the ladies are kept very severely aft; and if they formed a seraglio imprisoned on soft couches and fanned by eunuchs, behind walls ten feet thick, Jack at sea could not know less of the ladies at sea.

Hardy's job was therefore a delightful one, and the more delightful because the ship was now homeward bound, and the morning was fair and the sea courteous and graceful in caress.

"Do you see that black mark on the white under the glass?"

"Yes," answered the girl.

"It is called the lubber's mark: it is the business of the helmsman to keep a point of the compass aiming at it; that point is the ship's course. Do you observe that the point that is levelled at the lubber's mark is north-by-east?"

"If you call it so I shall remember it," answered the girl.

"The lubber's point," Hardy continued, "repre-

sents an imaginary line ruled straight from the stern into the very eyes of the ship, where the bowsprit and jib-booms point the road. If, then, I tell you to keep that point called north-by-east pointing as steadily as the swing of the ship's head will permit to the lubber's mark, then I am asking you to steer the ship in the direction I wish her to go."

She frowned a little in contemplation at the compass card, and said, "I believe I understand you."

"I will teach you to box the compass presently," Hardy went on. "You will easily get the names, and will not be at a loss if I should say the course is northeast or nor'-nor'east, and so on. And now see here: the action of a ship's wheel exactly reverses the action of a boat's tiller. Look under that grating; that is the tiller, and when you revolve the wheel the chains which drag the tiller sweep the rudder on one side or the other, so that when I tell you to put your helm a-starboard you revolve your wheel to the left, which will bring the rudder over to the left; and when I say port your helm you revolve your wheel to the right, which carries your rudder over to the right. If you steered by the tiller, then to the order of starboard your helm, you would put your tiller to the right. Do you understand?"

The machinery of the compass, the wheel, the tiller, and its chains girdling the barrel, was all before her, and she would have been a blockhead if she had not grasped the simple matter speedily — but you, madam, who are a lady and read this, may be puzzled; possibly you are not, but if you are I do not wonder.

"Now," he said, "I want the ship to be off her

course: mark what I do; she shall be a little to leeward of her course."

He put the helm by a few spokes over, and the binnacle card revolved two points from its course as the ship's head rounded away with the wind.

"Now," said Hardy, "I bring her again to her course: observe what I do: we call this putting the helm down."

He brought her to her course and arrested her at it, and the girl cried, eagerly, "Yes, yes, I see. Let me hold the wheel, George."

She grasped the spokes, a swelling, beautiful, conquering figure, a delight to the eye, a triumph of British girlhood, one of those women who are the mothers of the gallant and glorious sons that man the signal-halliards of our country.

"Now bring the ship to windward of her course," said Hardy.

"I do not understand you," she answered, reproachfully.

"Make that bowsprit yonder point *there*," he exclaimed, and he indicated with outstretched hand a part of the horizon to windward of the bow.

"Why didn't you speak more plainly? I can do it."

She revolved the wheel by three or four spokes, and hailed with eyes of transport and conquest the response of the compass card.

"Do you understand?" said Hardy.

"My dear," she answered, "I can steer your ship perfectly."

"Not yet," he said, "but you are not far off."

Thus proceeded this pleasant tuition, and for half an hour Hardy stood beside the wheel teaching his

sweetheart how to steer. The Newfoundland sat alongside of them and seemed to listen, for his loving eyes were often on Hardy's face whilst he spoke. He tried the girl again and again, and at the end of half an hour she was expressing keen appreciation of his delightful lecture by dutiful movement of the wheel. But, indeed, the ship did not need much steering that fine day. Had the helm been lashed it is probable that, braced as the yards lay, and pulling in steadfast accord as the sails were, the ship would have made a tranquil passage of an hour with no other check to the dull kicks of the rudder than a rope's end.

He left the girl to steer whilst he tautened here and there a brace with the watch-tackle; then entered the galley, saw to the fire, the coppers, and their contents. He was accepting an enormous obligation; could he discharge it? He felt the heart of a dozen men in his pulse, and he knew that if God did not smite her with sickness the spirit of his heroic girl would make her the match of any man, able-bodied or ordinary; so, though the *York* might be undermanned, her crew of a man and a girl, with a dog for a lookout, would carry her home.

The weather was so fine that he did not mean to make a job of seamanship. He did not intend to keep a lookout for ships unless it was to escape collision, because no ship that hove in sight, however willing, should be allowed to help him. The *York* was to be his own and the girl's fortune, and, much as he respected the sailor, no man afloat would be permitted to share in this estate.

He stood a minute on the forecastle to admire the beautiful fabric, and to pity the powerlessness which

held imprisoned the cloths whose lustrous spaces would have climbed to the trucks in bright breasts yearning for home. Afar trembled the pocket-handkerchiefs of the sodden brig. The naked vision could no longer distinguish their appeal. She broke the continuity of the girdle, that was all, and she hovered on the skirts of the deep like a gibbet beheld afar. Hardy went right aft to the wheel; it was in the afternoon, and the speed of the ship was about four miles an hour.

"We will make ourselves happy," said he. "This is yachting, and if you strain the imagination of your eyes you shall see close aboard the white terraces of the Isle of Wight."

She laughed and answered, "We shall be off that island some day."

"No fear," he replied. "Don't suppose I mean to sail her up channel. Plymouth is our port, and as we sha'n't be able to let go the anchor, I'll seize a blue shirt to the fore-lift and that 'ull bring a man-o'-war's boat alongside."

"Why?" she asked.

"Because it is the merchant seaman's signal that he wants to join the white ensign, and the naval officer is always greedy for men."

But this was spoken many years ago. The signal of the blue shirt has been hauled down and buried with many other customs under the thin white wake of the metal battleship.

"Why do you want a naval boat; would not any other boat do?" asked Julia.

"No; the Royal Navy claims no salvage and gets none. Any other boat would make a claim for assistance, and I mean that our cake shall be whole."

He brought two chairs out of the cabin, gave one to Julia and took one himself, with his hand on a spoke. Their faithful friend the dog lay in the westering sun beside them; and now they talked of what they should do in the night, and came to terms about the discipline of the crew whilst the ship kept the sea.

"I shall be on deck as much as I can," said he. "I must sleep on deck; I do not choose to lie without shelter during my watch below. I'll bring a hen-coop aft, thoroughly cleanse it, and put a mattress into it after knocking away the rails. That's a good idea!"

"Excellent!" she exclaimed; "and clear out another hen-coop for me. How romantic to sleep in a hen-coop!" and she laughed softly, looking lovingly at him.

"If I should crow in my sleep whilst you're at the wheel you'll know that I am being hen-pecked."

"Can't we put Sailor to some use?" she asked.

The animal lifted his head to the sound of his name, and all was intelligence in his soft, pathetic eyes.

"You shall sleep on a mattress at the foot of the companion-steps, where you will be sheltered. I have an idea. Are you strong enough to bring your mattress out of your berth and place it on deck with a pillow?"

"Chaw!" she answered, with a shrug. "I have lifted an old woman out of bed. What do you want me to do?"

"Spread your mattress on the port side of the steps, get a pillow, and stretch yourself upon it, and sing out when you're ready."

She instantly rose and descended; the dog was about to follow her.

"Lie down, Sailor!" and the dog obeyed.

In a few moments the clear voice sounded, "On deck there!"

"Hallo!"

"All ready, George."

"Shut your eyes and seem asleep. Sailor!" The dog immediately stood up with an inquiring look, ears slightly lifted. "Fetch her, Sailor! fetch her!"

The dog trembled, and looked with a sort of passion about him.

"Fetch her, Sailor! fetch her!" shouted Hardy, pointing down the hatch.

The noble creature sprang down the steps. In a moment Julia began to scream.

"Oh!" he heard her say; "he is tearing my dress, George."

"Come up with him; it is all right," he bellowed. And up came the girl with her skirt in the mouth of the dog, who tried to get in front of her to drag her as though they were both in the sea and awash; but she filled the way and the Newfoundland could not jam past her.

The dog held on till she was seated; he had not torn her dress, and the sweethearts fell into a fit of immoderate laughter, whilst the dog by pantomime of tail and motion exhibited every mark of satisfaction.

"What a wonderful animal!" said Julia.

"That breed is cleverer than we are," answered Hardy, "and as humane as angels. He understood me; it was like bidding him jump overboard after you."

"But what is your object, George?"

"I might want you, and if you are in a sound sleep and a breeze is blowing in low thunder over the companion-way, I might yelp myself into the disease of laryngitis without awakening you. The dog rests beside me and is at hand to call you."

"You are very clever, George. The more I see of you the cleverer you become. Dear old Sailor! must he lie beside you on deck unsheltered?"

"I shall lash an empty cask to the grating; there is plenty of sailcloth forward, and he shall have a kennel. Take the wheel, Julia; there is something to be done before the night falls. The breeze freshens too; hurrah, see how straight the white race flies astern of her! Under such canvas too! Keep her steady and don't be afraid."

"Afraid!" she answered with a glance at him, which made him feel as if he was married.

He walked forward, laughing, trusting his girl as though she had been an able seaman. A great deal of confusion followed when he caught a few hens out of one coop and thrust them into the other. Such heartrending screams of despair, and two cocks and five or six hens in the other coop strained their throats in clamorous sympathy, and you could have sworn that the whole crowd of them, cocks and all, had just laid eggs. When the hen-coop was clear he passed his knife through the lashings, fetched an axe, swept the bars out of their fixings to the accompaniment of the orchestra in the other hen-coop, drew a bucket of water, and with a scrubbing brush thoroughly cleansed the dirty thing, which had the width of a trunk, though much longer.

He found it was heavy to drag, being a somewhat

solid structure, so he called the Newfoundland to him and harnessed him to the coop by the watch-tackle. The dog tugged with the vigour of a man, Hardy shoved, and the hen-coop rushed along the deck right aft, whilst Julia with tears of laughter in her eyes kept the speeding ship to her course as though she had done nothing but steer ever since she could stand. But there was more yet to be done, and the sun was setting. He took the cooked meat out of the coppers and placed the steaming mass on a dish until it should grow cold.

Suddenly his ear was taken by a strange noise of hissing over the side; it was something more than the sheeting of the ship through the soft whiteness she made. It was like a continuous snarl threading the blowing off of steam.

He looked over the rail and saw the boat they had come aboard in from the brig rushing with comet-like velocity close alongside, like a little child swept to her home by the enraged mother that had lost her.

He debated a minute, and then said to himself, "She is of no use, neither she, nor the fresh water, nor the grub that is in her."

He was making his way into the channels to cast the painter adrift.

"Where are you going?" shrieked Julia at the wheel. He explained.

"If I see you in the water behind me I shall jump after you," she cried, with a look of alarm and real anxiety.

"Can't I drop into a ship's chains without going overboard?" he answered, and disappeared, and a short scream at the wheel attended his going.

The boat was easily released, and to the great joy of Julia the manly face of her sailor was once more visible. They both watched the boat as she receded.

"She'll be fallen in with," said Hardy, "and some skipper will log her and make a fearful mystery of her. Every tragic possibility of shipwreck is in her. She is the issue of fire, collision, the leak, the meteor-cloven craft —"

"What do you mean?" interrupted Julia.

"The ship's off her course," said Hardy. "That's quite right. Three spokes did it. Now look how fair the compass course points to the lubber's mark."

"What's a meteor-cloven ship?" she asked.

"I never heard of a big ship having been sunk by a meteor," he answered; "but I have been told of a great stone dropping out of the sky with the meteoric flash of a fallen star plump through the hatchway of a schooner and down through her: the sailors took to the pumps and then to the boats. That's what I mean."

And now he must prepare a bed for himself and the dog. He could not find an empty barrel, but just against the windlass the cook or the cabin servant had placed for firewood perhaps, or for other reasons, a big empty case, which might have contained wine or commodities of some sort. This placed on its side would do, and as it was too heavy for him to carry, and too rough for him to shove, he harnessed the Newfoundland to it as to the coop, and Sailor, helped by Hardy, ran the case close against the wheel.

"The ship is sailing very fast," said Julia.

"A little over five knots, perhaps," answered Hardy. "We wants legs, my love. Blow, blow, my

sweet breeze." And he sang to himself whilst he got the box on to its side and secured it to the grating.

"Now for your bed, Sailor, and then we'll go to supper."

He reflected, and remembered that there was straw in the fore-peak for the use of the old sow that had been and was gone — recollect that he had been mate of this ship, and knew exactly where to look for what he wanted. He dropped into the fore-peak, which was like descending into a hell of smells and the mutter of troubled water, and reappeared with his arms full of straw, transforming Julia's wistful face into beaming pleasure, for his briefest disappearance struck a sort of horror to her heart.

Thus was the Newfoundland housed, and before making up his own bed in the hen-coop the sweethearts went to supper.

The girl had been standing some time at the wheel. It was proper she should be relieved, so Hardy grasped the spokes whilst Julia went below, followed by the dog, to fetch something to eat. She arrived with wine, biscuits, jam, and tinned meats. You will remember that she had been an under-stewardess, and was used to waiting upon people. But that was not all: she had nursed old ladies, had for a very lean wage indeed washed, dressed, and walked out with children; in fact, she long afterward told Hardy that, always having emigration in her mind, she had worked at a laundry for some weeks. In point of service, therefore, she was well equipped for life, and Hardy saw in her the helpful woman, the wise and devoted wife, beautiful in figure and, now that she was happy, most engaging in face.

The three of the ship's company ate their supper, and two of them talked and watched the sunset. The further north you go the greater is the glory of the sun's departure; yet yonder was a magnificent scene of golden pavilions hung with tapestries of deep blue ether; the flight of the eastern cloud was like incense pouring from the evening star, unrisen or invisible: the vapour fled on the wings of the wind to enrich the light in the west by duplication of scarlet splendour, and the ship blew steadily along controlled by the hand of Hardy, who was sometimes fed by Julia.

All about was the soft, sweet noise of creaming seas; the brig astern had vanished into airy nothing, and the *York* sailed a kingdom of her own.

"Will there be a moon?" asked Julia.

"Between nine and ten," he answered. "A slice of moon. We can do without her. There is light in starshine, and we can do without that also. I must light the binnacle lamp and get the side-lights over. I thank God that this wind promises steadiness. Yet it may shift, and then I shall want the dog to awake you whilst I see what a single pair of arms can do with the braces."

"Do you think I shall not hear you if you shout?" said she.

"I'll not chance it," he answered.

"Do you believe we shall carry this ship home?" she asked.

"I'll not hope, for hoping is bragging, but we'll try, Julia. A man cannot add a cubit to his mother's gift of stature by standing on stilts; but we'll try, Julia."

"Who can do more?" she asked.

"Hold this wheel while I light the lamps."

He set about this job and speedily despatched it, knowing exactly where to lay his hands upon everything he wanted, then brought his mattress up along with the rug and jammed it into his hen-coop, and lay down. It was rather a tight fit with the mattress, but it gave him the length he wanted, and if he did not start in his sleep he need not knock his head against the ceiling. He carefully secured the hen-coop to belaying pins.

"That'll provide," said he, "against being taken aback."

He then went below and lighted the cabin lamp, and saw to Julia's bed by readjustment of the mattress clear of the draughts circling down the companionway. He fetched covering for her, and it was for her to make herself comfortable when the time came.

By this hour it was dark; there was no light upon the deep save the musket-like wink of the sea flash. But the stars swarmed in brilliant processions betwixt the clouds over the mastheads, and their subtle light was in the air, and you saw things dimly. The Newfoundland was asleep in his kennel beside the wheel. Julia, who had come aboard with nothing on but the clothes she stood in, fetched the captain's cloak from the captain's cabin. It was a long coat with a warm cape, and I call it a cloak because it wasn't a great-coat. It clothed her to her little feet, and she sat as warm in it as in the embrace of eiderdown.

"How shall we manage to keep watch?" she asked.

"I shall keep the deck till twelve," he answered;

"I have a watch, and there is the binnacle light which from time to time will want trimming. Sailor will call you at twelve — see now his use? And I'll trim the lights, and lie close beside you there for a couple of hours, for I can do with very little sleep, and the more sleep you can get the better, because you will keep strong and will be able to steer in the day whilst I take an off-shore spell in my coop."

"If I felt I could sleep, I would go and lie down at once," she answered; "but I love to sit and talk with you. What time is it, George?"

"Nearly half-past eight," he answered, putting his watch to the binnacle.

"Grant me till nine, I may then be sleepy. But I feel as if that sleep of drug was going to suffice me a year."

"Oh, my heart, am not I rejoiced that you should be with me!" he exclaimed, in a soft and melodious note of love. "Think if that madman had missed the brig and sailed on!"

She shuddered and answered, "I dare not think." Then after a pause she said, "Suppose a steamer came in sight, wouldn't she tow us home?"

"I wouldn't give her the chance."

"Why?"

"She would demand salvage, and get it."

"It is shameful," she exclaimed, "that a ship should be paid for helping a ship in distress."

"The shipowner knows no shame," answered Hardy, "and neither does his dumb confederate, the underwriter. One builds a jerry ship to sink, and the other pins a policy on to the villain's back that he may sleep whether his ship goes down or not."

It was strange to look along the decks and witness no figure of man. No shape of seaman was on the forecastle to extinguish a thousand stars as the jib-booms rose pointing to the sky; no shadow of man stirred in the waist or the main-deck. The mighty loneliness of the deep was in this ship from the wheel to where the forecastle rails clasped hands above the figure-head. But sentience was in her and she knew it, and nobly confessed the spirit of control by the glad, direct and cleaving shear of her stem.

Happy is the sailor who can sit beside his sweetheart on board ship on a fine night and discourse of love and other matters without dread of the eye of the master-mariner. This couple talked of the safe arrival of the ship. They would buy a little cottage; they would not go to sea any more. It is always a cottage well inshore that is the sailor's dream. It was our glorious Nelson's for many years; witness his letters to his wife, whom he loved before the traitress wound her brilliant coils round the hero's heart, and numbed the loyalty of its pulse to one who had cherished him in sickness and was his dearest one when the shadow of his life was yet short in the sun of his glory.

The dust of the shooting star glittered on high; the steady voice of the night wind filled the shrouds with the melodies of invisible spirits; the white wake gleamed astern like the dusty highway which is the road to home; the softly plunging bows awoke the minstrelsy of the surge. It was night upon the Atlantic, and no twinkle of side-lamp was to be seen upon the sea line.

At nine by Hardy's watch, Julia kissed her sweetheart's lips and held him by the hand a little.

"Good night, good night," she said; "I will say a prayer before I sleep."

"Never forget that," answered Hardy. "Be sure it is He that hath made us and not we ourselves. Pray to him and bless him and thank him, and his love will be with us."

Is this the common talk of the sea? Do Smollett and Marryat make their heroes converse like this? Thrust your hands into your ribs, ye ribald crew, and laugh with godless merriment at this presentment of a sailor who was a gentleman, who feared God, to whom the helplessness of his companion was no appeal to the heart that loved her, respected her, and desired that she should be true to herself and to him.

He was alone at the wheel, and now she was gone to rest and the dog was asleep he was alone in the ship, but he could keep a lookout as well as the dog, and the dog would not be called upon to serve until the girl was alone at the wheel whilst her lover slept.

Many thoughts were this fine young sailor's; he was full of hope and courage, and often bent his mind to shrewd contemplation of contingency — the shift of the breeze, the head wind, the gale, and other gay humours and tragic scowls of the life. But the winch was four men, and the watch-tackle a little company of hands, and he did not despair. Sometimes he meditated on the port he should make; if it came to the worst, then, when in the English Channel, he would shape a course for Ramsgate Harbour and run her on the mud, and no man must be suffered to board her, for the money of the safety

of the ship was to be his and hers, and that was the settled resolution of his soul.

When twelve o'clock came round he did not wish to sleep; he would have chosen rather that Julia should have slumbered until dawn. But the refreshment of rest was an imperious demand with which he must comply for his own and for the sake of the girl, the safety of their noble companion, the safety of the ship and her cargo. He thought he would try Julia by calling, and he shouted four or five times, but, as he had foreseen, the sweep of the wind broke his voice to pieces in the companionway, and her ears were blocked with sleep.

The dog started up and came to his side at the outcry of the man. "Fetch her, Sailor! fetch her!" he cried, pointing to the companion-hatch.

The Newfoundland barked and seemed to wonder.

"Fetch her, Sailor! fetch her!" he roared again, still pointing.

This time the dog understood. He sprang to the ladder and vanished, and a moment later Julia's cries were piercing. But it was merely the noise of terror such as would be excited in a girl awakened from a sound sleep by the resolute drag of a dog's teeth. She understood the thing in a minute, patted the dog, who was dragging her by her skirt to the ladder, snatched up her hat and the captain's cloak, and arrived on deck with the dog, whose tail timed the wag of the stars over the mastheads.

"Have you slept?" he asked.

"Too well," she answered. "I screamed because Sailor broke in upon a nightmare and fitted it."

"Will you be able to hold the wheel?"

"I'll try. What is the time?"

"After midnight — nearly one bell," he answered.

She stood at the wheel, and her firm grasp was full of promise of control.

"Is that the course?" she inquired, looking into the compass.

"Yes, and keep her to it as best you can by the starshine whilst I trim the lamp."

"What is our pace, dear?"

"Six and a half at least," he answered.

He made haste to trim the lamp and saw to the side-lights, and his spirits were high and his hope more exalted yet when he saw how well the girl steered. A big ship for a girl to control! And all the sweet archness of her incomparable posture was unconsciously expressed to her lover as he flashed the light over her before adjusting it for the illumination of the card.

"Now for a little supper," said he, "then I shall lie down."

He fetched some food and wine, and ate himself whilst he helped Julia to eat; the dog was remembered; and all the while he kept his eyes fixed in critical attention upon the girl's handling of the wheel.

"Sailor, go forward and keep a lookout, sir," he exclaimed, and this was an order which, as you know, the dog understood, and was accustomed to obey. He had supped and was thankful, and, faithful to his duty as Tom Bowline, the brave Newfoundland trotted forward to the forecastle, and took up a position of lookout betwixt the knightheads.

"Here is my watch, Julia," said Hardy. "Call me at half-past two — but sooner, at the instant of

need, if your arm should weary or the breeze shift and drive you off your course. I am a sailor and used to keeping my ears open in sleep. I am close beside you there, and your first cry will bring me out like a cork to the drag of a corkscrew."

"I will call you at half-past two," she answered. "She is as easy to steer as a boat. Look how steady the course swings at the mark there!"

He paused and gazed round him. The white cloud was speeding swiftly across the stars, and the ship hummed with the wind as the thrill of its ebon lines of gear, of shroud and stay and back-stay, shook its transport into the plank. The glass was steady — he had seen to that when he went below for the midnight supper; and there was no sign of worse, or changeful, or other weather within or on the verge of the mighty liquid sweep, whose heart was the ship, carrying onwards always the illimitable girdle on which she floated, the central figure of the night.

Hardy got into the hen-coop — a tight fit; but in it he was well sheltered, for the coop was under the lee of the weather-bulwark. He drew an old coat he had brought up over him, pillowed his head on the rolled-up flag he had thrown into the hen-coop, and in a minute was asleep.

A sailor's sleep is sound, and sacred as the slumber of death to his messmates and shipmates as they mutter softly round about him and tread the upper plank with airy feet that all shall be hushed in the forecastle — hushed unless it be the crying of the wind or the sullen thunder of the bow-sea, or the cries of the watch on high furling or reefing to the trumpet commands of the quarter-deck. Nothing

in all ocean romance is comparable to this picture of a full-rigged ship in command of a girl who is alone at the wheel whilst her lover sleeps, whilst a dog on the forecastle-head watches the ocean line with faithful eye for the sparkle of light, for the dim sheen of canvas, for the stream of smoke spangled with the stars of the furnace, that shall make him bark in barks as truthful of indication as the strokes of the tongue upon the ship's bell.

The wind held a sweet, true breeze as Hardy had foreseen, whilst that brave little heart kept the ship's course steady to the lubber's point. She was not tired, sleep had refreshed her; standing was no trial; she was warmly draped, and felt a sort of glory in this occupation of sea-throne, which enabled her to do her duty and to hold her sweetheart in tranquil and most necessary repose. She was quick in intelligence, and the sea was small and its weight was of the summer; and she found a woman's delight in her power of governing, for the ship answered to her white hand with a courtier-like grace; she felt to be queen of the lordly fabric, and her spell at the wheel was a triumph of British girlhood.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BOAT-FULL

It was hard upon half-past two in the morning. The breeze had been blowing steadily throughout, and the white pace of the ship was more than six knots in the hour. Julia put her hand into her pocket and pulled out Hardy's watch and saw what o'clock it was; the stars flashed over the mastheads with each floating reel of the buoyant, girl-controlled fabric; the silver dust of the speeding star vanishing in a length of fainting light scored the deep midnight blue between the clouds; the voice of the ocean rejoicing in the swinging dance of the breeze filled the air with sounds of the cataract, the foam of the waterfall, the wrangle of the freshet with the sea.

Suddenly, far forward past the shadowy arch of the fore-course, you heard the deep bay of a great dog. A ship was in sight!

"O God!" cried Julia at the wheel, interpreting the deep-noted thunder of the great creature, "What am I to do?"

But such a bark as Sailor could deliver was not to sound unheeded in the sleeping ear of a seaman. Hardy started, rolled out of his hen-coop, and was by Julia's side in a few pulses.

"I see her," he shouted, and seizing the wheel he put it hard a-port.

Then on the port bow loomed an ashen apparition with one red light, like the hideous stare of a drunkard, visible in the stagger of the bows. It was a full-rigged ship, clothed to her trucks with white canvas, about a mile and a half distant. She was standing to the southward and westward, and the red eye of the *York* was upon her; there would have been no collision, but Sailor's voice was timely. Hardy brought the ship to her course again, and the stranger was on the bow, sliding like a churchyard phantom over the glimmering tombstones of the deep.

"She is an American," said Hardy.

"How do you know?" asked Julia.

"She is clothed in cotton, that is why I know. What a noble lookout is Sailor. Didn't you see her?"

"I see her now, but not before now," she answered.

"Brave dog," cried Hardy.

He called to him and the Newfoundland came rushing aft, with many tokens visible in the starshine of the emotion of satisfaction which good dogs feel when they have done their duty.

"You are wearied out, Julia," said Hardy. "Do you feel as stiff with standing as a shroud of wire-rigging?"

"It is half-past two," answered the girl. "Here is your watch, George. Lie down, dearest, and I will stand here for another hour; I am not tired."

"Hold the wheel whilst I trim this light," was his answer. When this was done he said, "Now to bed, my lass."

She heard command in his voice, and answered, "I should love to lie in your hen-coop."

"Take off your hat and get into it. 'Tis snug enough. Pull the jacket over you, and sleep—sleep—sleep; and then you will be able to thank Mary Queen who sent the sleep that slid into your soul. But first go below and get a little wine and food."

She was as obedient as a good sailor, refreshed herself in the cabin where the lamp was burning, and returned with a glass of rum and water and a biscuit. "And my pipe," said he. And he told her where to find the pipe and the tobacco.

Before she got into the hen-coop he said to her:

"I wish I could teach the dog to steer; but that is impossible. But I tell you what — when those yards need trimming I shall want some one to hold on to the slack, and by all that's good Sailor shall do it."

"Why doesn't God enable such a creature as this to speak as we do?" said Julia. "It has the mind—why should it lack the voice, when even the filthiest cannibal may use his tongue?"

"Get you to bed, Julia."

She crept into the hen-coop, wrapped her clothes about her legs, pulled the sailor's coat over her, and lay watching her lover.

Hardy stood at the wheel with a pipe in his mouth, and the dog slept in his kennel alongside. It was not for long that Julia was allowed to sleep. When it was a quarter before four, when the darkness that grows deeper before the dawn dwelt like a sable vapour upon the face of the sea, when the flash of the star was fast in its westward sweep, and the red scar of moon looked dully down like a piece of broken glass thick stained, through which the crim-

son splendour above drains and oozes, the wind shifted suddenly three points; 'twas then almost abeam.

He called to the girl. Her awakening found her astounded by her situation. Was she in a coffin? He called again, and the saint-like voice of love brought her from her sepulchre of hen-coop with an eager cry of, "I am wide awake. What is it?"

"The wind has shifted, Julia. Do you know what I mean?"

"The wind has changed."

"Yes, you are awake. Take hold of this wheel."

She grasped the spokes. The dog would be of no use then; all Hardy could do was to slacken away the weather-braces and haul taut the lee-braces as well as a single pair of British arms could. He clapped on the watch-tackle here and there, and made the best job possible under the circumstances; but he was bothered by the want of somebody to hold on to the slack. However, by belaying the watch-tackle and then belaying the brace he in a one-man fashion managed it, and when he returned to the wheel the ship slipped to her course again with her shortened canvas rap-full, and a wake like a mill-race.

"Hurrah!" cried Hardy, with a slap of his thigh; "storm along, old Stormy! Whilst she creaks she holds! I'll teach that dog this morning to pull a rope. He has teeth and sense and some sailors have neither, because their teeth are worn out by chewing salt junk, and the crimp drugs their brains till the skull is like a rotten nut, full of dust."

"It is my turn at the wheel," said Julia.

"Just you go and turn in," he answered. "Here's

the skipper and there's the bed. I shall take an off-shore spell sometime to-day. Rest till breakfast-time, and then you shall light the galley fire, and boil some coffee."

She crept into the hen-coop after holding the binnacle lamp to his pipe, and the ship moved in the glimmering shadow through the hour of darkness with slightly restless yards at every solemn plunge, for, like the figure of a beautiful woman, she was the fairer in grace and the easier in carriage when moulded by the fingers of art.

Sunrise is beautiful at sea on a fine morning; the sky ripples with silver and rose, and the sea uplifts its fountain note of rejoicing as that great imperial mystery of the heavens, the sun, floats off the verge of the deep. The dawn found Hardy at the wheel and the girl asleep in the hen-coop. He did not curiously seek for a ship in sight, for he did not stand in need of help, and would reject it if offered. A sail was twinkling like a peak of iceberg right abeam to starboard, and Hardy looked at her, and thought of twenty other things. The breeze had slackened slightly; it was still a pleasant summer breast of sea, and the ship's speed was four. All plain sail might have given her seven, and the wings of the stunsail from topgallant yard-arm to swinging-boom end might have helped her into eight. No matter! She was homeward bound, and there was no growler in her ship's company if it was not the dog.

When Julia came out of her strange little bedroom she arose like Arethusa in Shelley's poem: rosy and fire-eyed, sweet with the refreshment of slumber, and sweeter perhaps to a man's eye because she was

unadorned. She pressed her lips to her sweetheart's cheek.

"Let me take the wheel," said she, "while you rest."

"Can you light a fire?" he answered.

She looked at him with reproachful wonder.

"What cannot I do? What has not poverty made me do?"

"Will you light the galley fire?" said he, "and fill a kettle out of that scuttle-butt, boil some water, and give us a hot drink of coffee? Poor old Crummie is dead and gone, but her spirit survives in tins, and I believe there is some preserved milk in the cabin."

She did not waste much time in lighting the galley fire. Everything was at hand. Whilst the kettle was boiling she fetched food from the cabin, and on top of the dog's kennel made some little display of tablecloth, cup and saucer, and knife and fork. This disturbed Sailor, who at once beheld the distant sail and saluted it.

"You shall be even more useful than that," said Hardy to the dog. "This morning I will look for the key of the safe and judge of the value of the contents."

"It is pleasanter than yachting," exclaimed Julia.

"We have to cross the Bay," replied Hardy. "It may come on hard from the east'ard and blow us to Boston."

"Is it always rough in the Bay of Biscay?" said the girl.

"I have swept up and down it often in my life," replied Hardy, "and five times out of ten we were becalmed on it, and thankful for catspaws. The thunder of the Bay continues to roar loud in the

song, and alarms the man in the street who talks of taking shipping south. Let him be hove to off the Horn in fifty-eight degrees south. Suppose you see if the kettle boils."

They made an excellent breakfast and so did the dog. Hardy ate and held the wheel, the ship, as though in love with her people, almost steered herself. There would come a change; the God-given mood of the sea is sweet, it is the weather that breaks her heart. As a drunken husband seizes his pale and pretty wife by the hair, and flogs her into shrieks and madness, so does the weather serve the ocean. It is good for the fish who breathe thereby, but bad for the passenger at whose white, overhanging face the invisible eye of the fish is uplifted languishingly.

"Now, Julia," said Hardy, "hold the wheel whilst I teach the dog a lesson in practical seamanship."

He stepped to the mizzen-royal halliards and called to the dog, which followed. He cast the rope off the pin, but kept one turn under the pin, and said to the dog:

"Seize it and pull!" holding out the slack.

The dog with much wagging of tail, as though he reckoned that Hardy meant some caper-cutting, seized the rope with his teeth. It was now a job. He wanted the dog to pull at the rope, so that when he swigged off at the halliards the dog by dragging would keep the slack taut as though strained by human hands. The intelligence of the Newfoundland is proverbial and marvellous, but it took Hardy all an hour to make the noble creature see what it was expected to do. He then did it, and Julia, whose laugh had been constant throughout the procedure,

let go the wheel to clap her hands, whilst Hardy with purple face swigged off upon the halliards, and the dog, with forward slanting legs, strained the slack. All three then rested: Hardy steered sitting, for, as I have told you, a little movement of the spokes sufficed.

After smoking a pipe whilst Julia looked to the galley fire — not with a view to cooking, there was plenty to eat — the sailor yielded the wheel to his sweetheart, and went below into the captain's cabin to explore the contents of the safe. First of all, he was to find the key; this proved a hunt, running into ten minutes; then of course he found the bunch of keys exactly where he looked last and should have looked at first — in the captain's desk. The key of the safe was one of a few on a ring. When he opened the safe he found several large metal boxes like cash-boxes. All these boxes were to be fitted by the keys on the ring. The first was flush with magnificent jewelry — bracelets, earrings, rings; and the flash of the diamond was like the sparkle of the sea under the sun. The second metal box was filled with gold chains of all sorts of pattern, some massive, some delicate as twine, of very beautiful workmanship. In the third box were watches and seals, all gold, of splendid manufacture, for in those days the watch was handsome, the mechanism exquisite as the chronometer of to-day, and the gold case was heavy. The fourth and last box contained curiosities, such as a Jew dealer with a yellow grin of awe would steal out of some mysterious hiding-place and show you with something of breathlessness and a frequent glance to right and left, and sometimes over his shoulder.

How am I to describe these things? A discoloured Nelson tall as a thumb, commanding the combined fleets in a cocked hat, on a large seal on which was graved Trafalgar. A little Napoleon in dull ivory on a massive gold seal with indistinguishable initials. Very old rings, very old gold spoons — but this is not an auctioneer's catalogue. Hardy locked everything up.

"Julia's and mine," said he, laughing softly; by which he meant the value of the salvage of the precious fal-lals.

He restored the ring of keys to the desk at which he glanced with a reverential eye, for he saw a little packet of letters in faded ink, and he knew that there too lay in a little circular box small curls of the hair of the dead — the wife and the little drummer. The captain had shown them to him, and the hair was the boy's when two years old. Hardy looked at the drum, at the little bed, at the medicine-chest, at the little clothes hanging at the bulkhead, and stepped out with a sigh, thinking in a sort of blind way about the mercy of God, the sufferings of madness, and the death of little children.

"Have you found any jewels?" asked Julia, as she stood at the wheel.

"More than you could wear, my dear," he answered, "if you were as many-limbed and many-headed as an Indian god."

"Are they worth much?"

"I am not a pawnbroker," he answered; "besides, I have been looking at the little drum and it has drummed the jewelry out of my head."

"For whom were the jewels intended?"

"There is always a market for trash of that sort in the Colonies," he replied.

"Why don't you lie down and get some sleep?" she exclaimed.

"I shall keep awake," he answered, "until I have shot the sun, and then perhaps I may sleep for an hour, weather permitting."

As he spoke these words he was looking at the sea right abeam, and held up his hand in a gesture of wonder, which arrested something that Julia was about to say.

"Good God!" cried Hardy. "What's going on there?"

It was about a mile and a half off, and just in that place the sea was working in a sort of convulsion, coil upon coil of dark blue brine wound round and round like mighty sea snakes, whose sport was as deadly as the pursuit of the harpooned dolphin. These amazing throes of brine upon which the sun was sweetly shining, and from which and to which the summer breast of ocean breathed in the rejoicing of the early morning, in a minute or two grew savage with snaps and leaps of foam, with prong-like upheavals of water, with crested shootings, and the area whitened to the hue of a star, and the volcanic fury began. The ship trembled. You heard no thunder of explosion; the roar of the fire under the ooze was dumb when it penetrated the spacious hall of the sea; but the raging torment was visible in a sudden mighty upheaval of foaming water, smokeless but glorious with its cloud of spray.

A miracle! From up from deepest soundings had been forked the figure of a drowned fabric, and as a ball plays poised on the feathering of a fountain so

floated the form of a small vessel with two lower masts standing, crowning the summit of that fire-expelled, pyramidal, and towering volume of foam. Such sights have been witnessed at sea, for the ocean is the arena of the sublime wonder, the heart-thrilling miracle; it is the mirror of God, and unlike the land its breast reflects his lights. The lovers gazed, the dog gazed; the ship seemed to dwell under her curves of canvas as though she paused to look.

"How marvellous!" cried Julia.

Hardy rushed for the glass. He caught the poised object before it vanished. It was a little ship of old shape, high in stern, sloping thence to curved head-boards, two masts like stone columns, richly encrusted with marine growth, and lustrous as the inner shell of the oyster; the hull was of a blackish green and looked black in the glass in contrast with the white fury upon whose apex it rolled and swayed and tumbled. Then it was gone! It vanished in a cannon volley of water. The sea thereabouts ran boiling, but in a few minutes the curl of the breeze-blown surge had triumphed over the milky softness, and had the spectacle been the launch of a dead man in a sailor's shroud you could not have seen less of it.

"Was ever such a sight beheld before?" said Julia, with tremulous breath and enlarged nostrils.

"'Those who go down to the sea in ships,'" answered Hardy. "Has not that observation been made once or twice before? I believe I have been forced to read it a thousand times, for every newspaper and every book that relates to the sea quotes this Scriptural sentence, and I am weary of it."

"I have heard of islands being thrown up," said Julia.

"A great deal is thrown up at sea," replied Hardy. "Steady the wheel, my heart, whilst I ogle the sun."

It will be admitted that this brace of sweethearts had not been very fortunate. To be burnt out, open-boated, drugged, kidnapped, shipwrecked on a derelict with a madman, are experiences of a rather emphatic sort. Hardy's share had been the share of a man, and bar the drug he could have gone through twenty fold worse and emerged a sunburnt, smiling sailor.

Fate for a little while was now to mask its grim features with a pleasant leer, and for the next two days of the ship's adventure the weather was calm, the sea smooth enough for a little yacht, the heavens bright with a little shading here and there of cloud, and all went well with the crew. On the morning of the third day Hardy came out of his coop like a snail from its shell, only a little faster. Julia was at the wheel, and the dog on the forecastle keeping a look-out.

"We are in luck," said Hardy, gazing around him. "Fancy only requiring to trim sail five times in two days."

"How far off is the abandoned brig, do you think?" asked the girl.

"All five hundred miles of salt water, Julia, and a salt mile is longer than a highway mile."

They were used to the ship and the ways and methods they had adopted. Thanks to the blessed weather, they had by alternation secured the rest that nature demanded. There was plenty to eat and they ate heartily. The dog was as useful as a mid-

shipman; he understood the meaning of the word slack, and held on to it when required as though his teeth were in the sleeve of a drowning man. There was coal in the fore-peak, and Hardy had made the necessary descent, and the stock in the galley was always plentiful.

This morning they went about their work as usual. Hardy steered. Julia lighted the galley fire, and the dog came aft to sit beside the wheel and wait for breakfast. How did Hardy look? How did Julia look? Very well indeed, I can assure you. When on board the abandoned brig the sailor's beard grew, and he had returned somewhat bristling to the *York*. But in this ship were his razor, lathering brush, and a square of glass to make faces in. He was therefore now a clean-shaven man, and I don't believe there is any girl living who would not have fallen in love with him. He had choice of clothes, too, which put him to windward of his sweetheart. But the eye of love should never be affected by apparel, and when Julia clothed herself for warmth and the night in the madman's cloak she was still an incomparable figure and of romantic face. Clothes have very little to do with health; you may sometimes peep at the goddess through a rent in the coat, and I have met her in country lanes and crossing meadows in the picturesque garb of the scarecrow with such cheeks of scarlet, such eyes of light, such teeth of ivory as might prove the envy and the despair of her ladyship travelling, like the suds of a washerwoman's tub, in carriage and pair to a princely festival.

In fact, Julia was sparkling to the caressing hand of this new life. The health of the sea was hers,

the love of the sailor was hers, content and hope were hers. Do not these things wait upon appetite and help digestion? Do not they irradiate slumber with entrancing visions? If the girl soiled her hands by lighting the galley fire, she knew where to find the head pump and the galley clout or a towel from aft to dry her fingers.

Whilst they were eating their breakfast this morning the dog sprang on the grating abaft the wheel and barked its lookout to the sea to windward, about two points before the beam.

"Hold this wheel, Julia!" exclaimed Hardy.

He sprang for the telescope and levelled it, and the light sweep of the ship's summer lurch darted a boat with a lugsail into the lens. He viewed her intently in silence, which Julia did not dare to break into by heedless, girlish cries of "What is it?" like the distracting marginal notes of the lady's pencil in the tearful, the hysteric, and the religious novel. How far distant that boat was off I do not know, but she lay very clean and clear in the powerful tubes which Hardy was bringing to bear upon her. Her sail was like a square of satin; the fabric was painted black; as she rose to the fold you saw the delicate gush of foam at the bow. Hardy counted eight men in her, and one figure that was in the bows continuously waved some streaming thing white in his hands.

"My God!" cried Hardy, letting fall the glass to his side. "What a misfortune!"

"What is it?" asked Julia.

"A boat-full of shipwrecked men," he replied, and his face grew grim as he said it. "They may

be dying of thirst and famine, and they must not come aboard."

"Oh, George!" exclaimed Julia, grasping the thing in an instant.

"If they came aboard," he continued, speaking swiftly and even fiercely, "they may seize the ship; in any case their salvage claim would wreck our hopes. Put the helm up. By God, they shall not board us!"

He sprang to the wheel, and the ship sloped away to leeward from her course, and the bearings of the boat were then abaft the beam. Julia picked up the glass, and with an easy hand directed it.

"She is sailing as fast as we," she exclaimed.

"No!" answered Hardy, in a rage.

"Must they be left to perish?" she cried.

It was an awful problem for fate to submit to a sailor's mind. The very thought of thirst, of famine, of suffering incarnate in the miserable figures of men in an open boat at sea makes faint the heart of the seaman, and sooner would he expire than not fly to help. But how stood this ghastly conundrum with Hardy? First, who were the men? They might be foreigners — Greeks, Italians, Portuguese, Spaniards. They had knives on their hips, and their hearts would redden with the spirit of murder when, being on board, they understood that the flag was the Red Flag of England, and that nothing stood between them and the ship and a fair-haired English girl, of incomparable figure, but one man, whose heart beat within the reach of their shortest blade! No! They must be helped but not received. And how was it to be done? And meanwhile grew this fear — if the wind slackened, if a calm fell, they

would gain the ship with their oars. Hardy was without a revolver. Captain Layard had taken away his; how could he resist — how could one man resist the desperate clamber of eight men infuriate with thirst, famine, and deadlier passions yet if they were foreigners?

He pondered deeply, grasping the wheel; the dog upon the grating watched the boat, a lustrous spot to the naked eye, and Julia gazed in silence at her sweetheart.

"Come and hold the wheel," said he.

Still in silence witnessing distress but resolution in his face, she seized the spokes, and he went to work to help that open boat. There were, as you know, two boats in the davits, and a gig, called the captain's gig, hung by davits over the stern. Rushing to the foremost boat, Hardy seized the empty breaker out of its bows and ran with it to the scuttle-butt, and, swiftly as he could, filled it. He then replaced the breaker in the boat's bows. He next sped down the companion-ladder, filled a tin basket with bottles of beer and two bottles of rum, returned on deck with this basket, and placed it in the boat. He then fetched some tinned food, a quantity of ship's biscuit and an uncooked ham, which would be good eating to starving men. They were eight, and he made calculations for a week's supply with care. He threw a pannikin into the boat. He breathed hard and fast, and his face was coloured with blood, and the sweat drained from his hair to his eyebrows; for he was mad to succour and mad to escape, and all the while he worked he never spoke a word to the girl.

It would have been an impossible task but for the

steady flow of the sea, and the gentle yielding of the ship to the caressing sway of the fold. But it fell out as it was, and Hardy did it whilst Julia steered, and the ship blew softly onwards, whilst the white spot abaft the beam, watched by the dog, gleamed like a meteor whose foam would be a little disc when near. He freed the boat of its gripes by his knife, a sharp blade, then, just as Layard had before him, he lowered the boat by easing away first the bow, then the after falls, until she was water-borne, when, with a sailor's activity, he passed his knife through the tackles, and the ropes fell into the boat. She was liberated! and whilst he filled his lungs, distressed in breath, so ardent and energetic had been his toil, the boat was astern, then in the ship's wake, and Julia could see her by looking over the taffrail.

"They'll come up with it," said Hardy, going to the girl's side, "and their overhauling her will widen our distance."

"It was the only way to feed them," Julia answered.

"One way. Have they fresh water enough? Eight men! We may want that other breaker," said he with a side nod at the remaining quarter-boat. "They'll be fallen in with — perhaps before sundown."

He picked up the glass and again scrutinised the boat. She leapt into the lens within a quarter of a mile. The man in the bows stood upright, but he was no longer flourishing his wift. They were heading almost into the ship's wake, and were certain to see the quarter-boat and understand what she meant. Along the rail the heads of the men were

fixed like cannon-balls. Supposing they were Englishmen. What would they think? Hardy ground his teeth and twice beat the air with a clenched fist. But supposing they were Dagos. Supposing — he could not have acted otherwise. Life, love, and hope were the inspiration of his resolution, and I say he could not have acted otherwise.

It was then, happily for him and his sweetheart, that the sea to windward darkened a little to a pleasant freshening of breeze. The breasts aloft swelled to the larger breath, but so scantily clothed was the *York*, it was absolutely certain that if the breeze scanted the boat would overhaul the ship, and once those eight men got alongside the rest might prove — Good night!

Again Hardy looked at the boat through the telescope, and he cried out with the tubes at his eye:

"It's all right, Julia; they're heading dead for the quarter-boat. Whether they understand or not, it's all right."

He grasped the wheel and brought the ship to her course and this greased her heels somewhat, for the yards were trimmed for the course he was steering and the sails drew bravely. Julia kept the glass to her eye.

"They have lowered their sail," she cried. "They are very near the boat."

It was all blank to the naked eye, and Hardy searched in vain for that star whose rise might have proved the malignant star of death and dishonour to them both. Again the lovers shifted places. Julia held the wheel whilst Hardy directed the glass at the boat. He watched the minute manœuvres. It was a little field of Lilliputians, but

every figure was as clean cut in the lens as the pygmies to the downward gazing eyes of Gulliver. The two boats came and went behind and upon the summer swell of the sea, but not so as to baffle the marine vision. The naked mast rolled and the men showed plain. Thirst and famine were in their motions, and Hardy sighed and gasped as he watched. He saw the infuriate gesture that brought the bottle to the mouth, the impassioned posture as the cracked lips drained the pannikin. He witnessed avidity, coloured into horror by human need in the passage of the clenched biscuit or piece of meat to the mouth. It nearly broke his heart to leave them. If ever a man was inspired by the compassion, the instincts, and the loyalty of a sailor, it was Hardy. Yet he thanked God with all his heart that they had plenty, that the weather promised fair, that they had another and a good boat, and that in this highway of the sailing ship human help was certain if calamitous destiny were not first. Hardy's eyes were moist as the telescope slowly sank from his arm; for let them be Dagos, let them be Dutchmen, call those men by any name you will, they were shipwrecked sailors upon a lonely sea, and their appeal to the Red Flag of England would have been irresistible but for the helpless condition of the *York*. Julia saw emotion in her lover's face, and caressed him with her eyes as though she would soothe him with her love, and never did she honour him more, nor felt a fuller flow of dumb and inward gratitude to the Father of all for this lifelong gift of sympathy, help, and devotion.

"We shall run them out of reach of the glass," said Hardy.

"I can scarcely see them as it is," she answered.

"What is their story?" he went on. "It will be told because they will be saved. Yonder is one of the teachings of the sea. You pass a piece of wreck; it is encrusted with the jewelry of the ocean; it is girdled by a silver belt of fish. To one man it is a piece of wreckage; to another man it is a memorial, lofty, sublime, and awful as a cathedral, of fire, of explosion, of the beam-ended fabric with lashed figures in the shrouds, sunk to the foam, and blackening it with emergence like the iron shape dangling at the finger of a gibbet upon a wintry moor that foams with snow."

"Do all sailors talk in this language?" said Julia.

"Any man who can make himself understood speaks well. I do not love irony."

Julia smiled archly.

"You do not love irony," she said. "Did you ever love another before you loved me?"

"A man who uses the sea is shy amongst women," he answered. "We are accustomed when we see a green eye in thick weather winking off our port bow to sing these lines:

> "'There's not so much for you to do,
> For green to port keeps clear of you.'

I was never yet in a collision — I mean ashore."

This pleased her, and she said she would go and look to the galley fire if Hardy would kindly hold the wheel.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HAIL, COLUMBIA!

LUCK was still to attend the ship's company of the *York* — luck in the shape of weather. The wind took two days to change its mood, then shifted off the port bow, where Hardy's metaphoric red eye was winking.

The man, the dog, the watch-tackle, and the winch were equal to the sudden confrontment of air, which happened at daybreak when the man and the dog could see, and when the girl at the wheel could see.

Of course sail was not trimmed as though the *York* had been a frigate, as though you had fifty men for a rope, when the master-mariner considers himself lucky if he gets twenty-five men for a full-rigged ship. Trimming sail took time; but it was done. And the dog stuck like glue to the slack. No need to dwell upon the discipline; it was now as before, and likely to continue whilst health and strength endured. The sweethearts used the hen-coop alternately, and it yielded them all necessary refreshment of slumber; the dog kept a lookout whilst the girl steered, and still the ship's course was a crow's flight for the Chops, with some hurdles of parallels before her indeed; but her march though slow was conquering, and the lovers' spirits were as

high as the dog-vane that shook its piece of bunting at the main-royal masthead.

When Hardy had trimmed sail this morning he sat beside the girl to rest a little. The wind was to the westward of north, the sky that way was pale, but the sun to starboard burnt bright, and lofty ridges of cloud, very delicate, like the memory of the ripple on the sands of the coast, moved stealthily northwest, which signified sundry currents of air of no moment, if below all gushes the favouring breeze.

"We'll breakfast in a few minutes," said Hardy. "I feel as if I have been swimming ten miles."

"We are in luck, George," answered Julia.

"What is the luck of the sailor?" said he. "I have heard of one lucky sailor. He went to a sale and bought a feather-bed. Jack in a feather-bed! He turned in and his starboard bunion was worried by something hard. He ripped the cover and found a bag containing one hundred and forty-two Queen Anne guineas. He started a public-house and died worth eight thousand pounds."

"He was a sailor and deserved it," said Julia. "Why do sailors hate soldiers?"

"The historian must answer that. There is a reason, and it is true. You see, my dear, a sailor will spend his last half-crown upon his girl, and a soldier will borrow the last half-crown from *his* girl."

"Do soldiers hate sailors?" asked Julia, laughing.

"They only meet at sea," answered Hardy, "and the motion of a ship will neutralise prejudice in the man who can't stand it."

In due course the galley fire was lighted, coffee

was boiled, and the ship's company broke their fast. The breeze hung steady, the glass spoke hopefully, and Hardy found, after taking sights, that home was nearer by some hundred miles than it had been yesterday. It was nine o'clock on the evening of this day. The lights of heaven winked sparely through an atmosphere that nevertheless was unthickened by mist. The fresh wind of the noon had slackened much, and the sound of the fall of the sea off the bow was sloppy, as though the cook was emptying buckets of stuff over the side, and indeed the noise was in keeping with the sort of smoking, greasy face of the sea, which rolled in knolls of soft, black oil speedily out of sight, so general and closing was the dusk.

Julia stood at the wheel, and the dog as usual was on the forecastle head keeping a lookout. The girl could distinctly hear her lover snoring in his hencoop. The magic of the ear of love runs melody into the snore of the sweetheart; to the burdened marital organ the snore is not the voice of the heavenly chorister. Shakespeare wonders whether we dream in our sleep of death; Julia might have wondered if we snored. The binnacle lamp burnt brightly, so did the side-lights. The girl had been sleeping whilst Hardy steered, and now stood fresh and firm at the wheel, a very shadow of British girl, snug in the madman's cloak; but the faint stars knew that her figure was beautiful.

Suddenly the dog began to bark; its deep note rolled aft in low thunder. Julia, with her heart slightly fluttering, strained her eyes to port and then to starboard, believing that the dog was reporting the side-light or white masthead light of a ship or

steamer. But the dog continued to bark, and in the midst of it, before it awoke Hardy, before she could call to Hardy, a smell, an overpowering stench, fumes as overwhelming as any that could rise from the shallow tombs of thousands of plague-stricken wretches — this subduing and distracting presence was in the air.

"George! George!" shrieked the girl. But she could not again speak, for the filth of the breeze compelled her right hand to her mouth and nostrils, and the brave heart steadied the spoke with her left hand only.

In a minute Hardy was beside her. "Phew!" said he, and spat. This was his comment.

The dog continued to bark. Its note had that quality of alarm which makes the sailors spring as for life or death to the affrighting shout of a single man upon the forecastle.

"What in hell —" But it might have been the devil himself who stopped Hardy's mouth then, for even as he spoke the ship struck something soft, and slided away from it points off her course, so blubbery was the thing, proper for the "ways" of a launch.

"It's up the spout this time," said Hardy. "Jump to the side, Julia; report what you see. There you go, to starboard — to windward, to windward!"

He held the wheel, and the girl shrieked, "I can't see for the smell."

"Hold your nose and skin your eyes, and tell me what you see."

"A great deal of fire, and a black mass in the midst of it lined with foam, and oh, what a horrible smell!"

She came staggering to her lover's side in revolt of sickened senses.

"A dead whale," said Hardy, whose nose was not entirely fastidious.

"Hold the wheel, dear," and he sprang to the quarter and saw the thing; that is, he saw the shadow, it loomed so that it might have been a little island. The fire of the sea played about it as the reflected lightning of the hidden storm winks and flashes in the soft indigo of the ocean recess. The sea caressed this floating dunghill with those same white, cruel fingers with which it casts the mutilated corpse ashore.

"The air sweetens," said Hardy, returning to the wheel. "Go below for a nip of brandy, and bring me one, dear."

And he brought the ship to her course. He did not greatly like the look of the weather. For perhaps an hour and a half he had been sleeping; this was a good "turn in" for a sailor-man who signs articles to work for the shipowner for twenty-four hours in the day, a brutal and inhuman tax upon suffering men, in no other walk of life to be heard of. Anyhow he could not leave the ship in Julia's charge with those dimly winking stars growing sparer yet, with increasing moisture on the wing of the wind like the early breath of a wet squall.

"I don't expect the wind to shift," said he, "but it's bound to come on harder presently. Get you into that hen-coop and rest your limbs if not your brain. I expect I shall be wanting you before midnight."

She obeyed him as though she had been a sailor or a dog, and dissolved into the black void of the hen-coop. You could not see the faintest glimmer of her face, nor the dimmest outline of her shape. The Newfoundland had come aft and berthed itself. The

animal knew that when Hardy was at the wheel it was its watch below.

Now the ship was under such small canvas that her cloths were not more than she could stand up with if it blew half a gale from abeam or abaft the beam. Those were the days of single topsails, and in all three topsails a single reef had been tied by the survivors of the crew in the heavy night before they left for the Frenchman. It would then come perhaps to a drag upon a staysail down-haul and to letting go the outer jib-halliards, leaving the unfurled sail to convulse itself into bulbs and bellies of canvas upon the jibboom. Certainly Hardy single-handed could not lay out upon the jibboom and furl a big jib: he did not mean to try.

As he expected, the wind freshened, but without the shift of a quarter of a point. The ship raced nobly through the gloom: she blew white steam from the nostrils of her bows; the white water to leeward widened with her pace and flashed with the emerald and diamond of the sea glow into the long, the streaming, the joyous homeward-bound wake. There was no more dead leviathan in the air; it was full of the salt sweetness of Swinburne's rushing sea verse. But the stars were gone; there was no light upon the sea but the light of its foam. The ship was plunging, the seas raced her in black curls, and burst with a pallor of dawn from her side, and onward she swept, bowing and rolling to the music of the bagpipes in her rigging, controlled by a single hand — a fearless and a valiant hand — the hand of a British sailor.

However, he made up his mind to "crack on" in a sort of way, and the meaning of "cracking on" at

sea is the carrying in bad weather of more canvas than the judicious would approve. I have known an old skipper to furl his fore and mizzen-royal and stow his flying jib every second dog-watch in dead calm or catspaw. The ladies reckoned him a safe man, and he made the voyage from the Thames to Sydney Bay in four months. Hardy had the instincts of a mate, and was always for carrying on; but he had not much confidence in staysail and jib-sheets, and at half-past eleven, seven bells of the first watch, somewhat benumbed with his grip of the spokes, he resolved to shorten canvas, and shouted to his girl. She came out of the coop like a figure from a clock.

"Is it a storm?" said she in his ear.

"Let's thank God," he answered, "like the sailor in the song, that there are no chimney-pots in the air. I wonder if I can trust you with this wheel? It doesn't kick very much, and I sha'n't be long."

"You don't want to turn in, then?"

"Love ye, no," he answered. "Get a good hold of these spokes, and I'll stand by."

He watched her, conceiving that if the ship was off her course now and again it would not signify a brass farthing. The wheel-chains are a good purchase upon the tiller, and Julia's arms were strong and determined with the labour she had been put to, whether ashore or at sea. Young women cannot pull ropes on board ship, or lift old ladies out of bed on dry land, without adding strength to the muscles of their arms and determination to the clutch of their fingers.

Hardy stood close beside Julia ready for that kick of the helm which, whilst he had stood at the wheel,

had on three or four occasions started him out of a mood of musing. Twice came the kick — the blow of the surge against the rudder, but the girl held on and the ship swept on, and with every freshening of the black roar aloft the words of the Yankee poet came into Hardy's head:

> **"Then suddenly there burst a yell**
> **That would have shock'd and stagger'd hell."**

"You'll do," said Hardy.

He called the dog and they went forward. There is no good in talking of jiggers, down-hauls, sheets, halliards, winches, and such things to landsmen. Enough, then, if it be said that by first letting go and then by hauling down, Hardy, helped by the dog and the jigger — which is another word for the watch-tackle — succeeded in easing the ship of two or three pinions of staysails and jib. The jigger manned the down-haul stoutly, and the dog stuck like glue to all slack he was asked to concern himself with. The sails were left to flap and slat and thunder. What could Hardy do? If the canvas went to pieces they must carry the ship home without it; if it held, there were the dog, the jigger, and the man to rehoist it. A mate's ear does not love the noise of slatting canvas, and Hardy as he stood in the bows guessed with something of helpless disgust that the jib-boom was buckling a bit. The foretopmast staysail and the inner jib were roaring like a thunder-storm, and a living gale swept out of the iron curve of the bolt-rope of the fore-course.

It was white water often to the figure-head, the midnight magnificence and wrath of foam, the

stormy bellowing of the recoiling and shattered sea. Heavenly Father! to think of this rushing, shadowy structure, this clipper fabric, whose stern was out of sight in darkness from the bows, controlled by a girl!

Hardy ran aft to take the wheel, and the dutiful dog trotted beside him. How did that night pass? In simple alternations of coop and wheel.

It was not to be a long night; the business of the half-gale did not begin until eight bells of the first watch, and it was nearly two bells before Hardy had made an end with his staysails and jib. It was not perhaps in those days so extremely necessary as it is in these to keep a bright lookout for ships' lights, simply because the steam vessel was comparatively few, and the sailing ship was not greatly accustomed to interpret her presence by the red and green wink. The flourish of the lamp hastily plucked out of the binnacle was deemed as good a flare as an empty flaming tar-barrel, and, indeed, it sometimes sufficed. Collision in the days of timber was not collision in the days of steel. Colliding ships ground away each other's channels amidst the benedictions of the forecastle and the poop, and the spluttering expostulations of crackling spars on high. Now 'tis touch and sink, so ingenious and preserving is the water-tight bulkhead, so grand in assurance of the salvation of precious life is the keel-up boat, secured beyond all release of knife or tool to the skid. Everything is riveted, and everything goes, and it takes half a dozen gunboats to sink a wooden wreck maliciously floating in the track of the supreme expression of the modern shipwright's art.

The break of day found Hardy at the wheel.

But he had slept since he was last heard of, and Julia had stood her trick, kick or no kick, whilst Sailor kept watch on the forecastle head. The wind had greatly fallen, the sea had greatly fallen, and the complexion of fine weather was in the dawn. With the rising of the sun the weather promised beauty and splendour: blue seas far as the eye could reach breaking in foam, masses of sailing cloud in the sky like vast puffs of vapour from the funnel of a locomotive; and right astern, a film of pearl in the windy blue, hung a sail.

It was not seen for some time by Hardy, nor by the dog that slumbered in its kennel; but when Julia came out of her coop to the summons of the sun, she instantly saw the sail and called and pointed; and whilst she held the wheel the dog sprang on to the taffrail and barked, and Hardy fetched the glass.

A cloud of canvas coming up astern hand over hand. Topsails, topgallantsails, royals, and skysails; the wind fresh off the beam; a topgallant-stunsail yearning from its boom end: the beautiful vision, a leaning light with the blue sea in foam betwixt it and the *York*, and beyond, the immeasurable heavens sloping past the working rim of the deep.

"A Yankee," said Hardy, putting down the glass. "Skysails — why not moonsails, and angels' footstools? D'ye know that you can sometimes stop a ship by cracking on? I've hove the log and found her doing ten: thought to get more out of her; set royals and topmast-stunsails: hove the log and found her doing nine. Why? Because a ship isn't built to sail on her side."

The galley fire was lighted; coffee was boiled; the sun shone brightly, and the ship astern was

coming up fast. Whilst Julia held the wheel, Hardy mastheaded the red flag of our country at the gaff end, and there it streamed, meteoric, as in the song.

"It is like being in the Docks to see it," cried Julia.

"It is like feeling that there are no bally Dutchmen in the world!" answered Hardy.

They breakfasted in a manner afore-described, and often watched the ship astern. She was a black spot under a white cloud.

"Undoubtedly a Yankee," said Hardy, with his mouth full of white biscuit. "She'll wonder at us, and what will she do?"

"They must not help us," said Julia.

"Fancy her sailors sparkling with the jewels in the safe, fancy her skipper and mates singing out orders with heavy gold chains round their necks, and diamond earrings in their Yankee lobes! I do love the Yankee captain; he stands at the break of the poop and watches his mate kicking a man's brains out of his skull, and he yells out, 'Heave him over the side whilst he's breathing.' It is all sweetness and light aboard the Yankeeman. Some of these days the great Republic will awaken to recognition of the claims of her merchant sailors. The immortal Dana did his best, which was noble and lasting. But oh, the crimes, the cruelties, the murders which make the Yankee ship of trade a bitterer hell for men than the hell of the monk's invention!"

But a stern chase is a long chase, albeit you are under single-reef topsails and fore-course only, whilst t'other heaps your wake with skysails and stunsails. It was half-past nine before the ship astern was on the *York's* quarter; a black barque with an

almost straight stem, taking the seas under her swelling heights with the springs and leaps of a deer chased by the hound.

Her colour, if it flew, was invisible as yet, but her nationality was as certain as a goatee. Jonathan was at the helm and Jonathan was at the prow, and Hardy easily guessed that the condition of the *York* flying the flag of a rich relation was puzzling the intelligence of the gentleman whose legs are represented as clothed with the bunting of Stripes and Stars. Yes, Jonathan was puzzled, and like Paul Pry meant to intrude, whilst hoping that he didn't.

On a sudden she clewed up skysails, royals, and topgallantsails, boom-ended her studdingsails, and came surging with little more than the speed of the *York* on to the clipper's quarter within easy hail. A man stood on the rail holding on by the mizzen-rigging. No flag flew at the gaff end, but the word Yankee was writ in letters as big as the barque herself. The figure grasped an old-fashioned weapon for the conveyance of sound — a speaking-trumpet; he put it to his lips, and whilst a small crowd of men on the barque's forecastle, attired in dungaree and vary-coloured headgear, gazed at the *York* with the steadfast stare of sheep at a barking dog in a field, the man with the trumpet delivered his mind thus:

"Ho, the ship ahoy! What ship are you?"

Hardy, with one hand to his mouth, Julia meanwhile steering, roared back:

"The *York,* of London; bound to London."

This was all he said. He did not inquire the barque's name; it was no business of his to know it. But she was forging ahead, and the name under the counter in long white letters grew visible: ***Columbia*** — Boston.

"Where's your crew?" shouted the man with the trumpet.

"On deck," was the answer.

A man standing by the figure on the rail took the speaking-trumpet and replaced it by a telescope, which the figure levelled at Julia.

"He's admiring you," said Hardy.

"I dare say the crew on that forecastle are laughing," she exclaimed.

"Sailors are too well fed to laugh easily," replied Hardy. "Oily men, fat men, rich men, seldom laugh."

All between the two speeding vessels was the rush of the white surge, and the ships seemed to salute each other like acquaintances as they bowed in stately rolls and sang the song of the shrouds one to the other, for it is all singing at sea — singing or singing out.

Suddenly when the barque had drawn on to the weather-bow of the *York* she was luffed up into the wind, and the weather-half of her loftier canvas was aback.

"They mean to visit us," said Hardy.

"Not to stay, I hope," said Julia, anxiously.

In a few moments some figures broke from the barque's forecastle crowd and ran aft, and a white boat of a whaling pattern, sharpened stem and stern, sank from its davits with six men in her, and the man who had given the telescope to the figure on the rail steered the boat.

Hardy put his helm down and shook the wind out of his small canvas, and presently the boat was hooked on alongside, and an American sailor — a chief mate — clambered over the rail on to the deck of the *York*.

It is bad taste to imitate accents, or oddities of phrase, or nasal deliverances. This Yankee mate then shall speak as our first cousin does.

"Do you mean to say," said he, touching his cap as he approached Hardy and Julia, "that you and this lady" — he bowed to her — "are your ship's company?"

"No," answered Hardy. "We have that dog: he is worth ten foreigners, and we have a watch-tackle and a winch."

"And you are carrying this ship to London alone?"

"Ay."

The Yankee mate looked a little stupefied, glanced along the deck, then up at the Red Ensign, then at the girl who stood beneath it.

"Where are you from?" he asked.

"See here," said Hardy; "I intend to spin my own yarn when I get ashore, and I do not mean that it shall either be diminished or exaggerated by report. This lady and I propose to carry this ship home alone, and that flag flies in vain if we fail."

"Well, I am surprised," said the mate of the barque. "It must be very uncomfortable. Your outer jib is slatting, and your staysails want stowing. Can we help you?"

"I am very much obliged," replied Hardy, "but before you call your men aboard this lady will kindly bring from the cabin a bottle of grog and glasses, that we may drink to the good voyage of the *Columbia* and to the increasing greatness of your magnificent country."

"I am willing," answered the mate, and as Julia disappeared he exclaimed, "Is she your wife, sir?"

"No; she is my sweetheart; she is the daughter of a retired commander in our Royal Navy, and if God suffers us to reach home she will be my wife."

"She is a very fine young woman," said the mate.

"She has a splendid spirit," answered Hardy, "and she is a very fine young woman as you say."

Julia knew the ways of the under-stewardess, and was quickly on deck again with a tray of glasses, cold water, and a bottle of brandy. She mixed the spirits, each man saying "when," and took a little drop herself, just enough to be sincere with in her good wishes. The Yankee mate did not seem to greatly trouble himself that the figure on the barque — undoubtedly the skipper — should keep the telescope bearing upon them. With one hand on the spoke Hardy, with the other hand, held aloft the glass of grog, and said:

"Here's to your beautiful barque, and to the noble country from which she hails!"

He drank and so did Julia, and the mate before drinking said:

"Here's to the Red Flag of Old England, and to the fine girls who steer ships under it!"

Julia laughed merrily, and thought the mate better looking now than she had at first believed. He was a little sallow, a little long-faced, and on the whole what the Americans call slab-sided; but he had the eyes of an honest man and the looks of a good sailor, and if his name were inscribed on the dome of St. Paul's nothing better could be said of it.

"My captain will be getting impatient," said the mate. "He'll wonder that you don't take assistance."

"If your men will hoist that canvas for me," answered Hardy, "I shall ask no more help."

"What a beautiful dog is that!" said the Yankee mate, hanging in the wind, so much did he relish this novel rencounter and brief association in mid-Atlantic with a young lady of incomparable figure. "I would be the happiest man in America if I owned that dog."

"All America would not purchase him," answered Hardy; "his name is Sailor, and he has the spirit of Nelson. He helps me and the watch-tackle to brace up, keeps a lookout like a madman in search of the philosopher's stone, never gets drunk, and always says his prayers before he turns in. Will you have another drop of brandy?"

"No more, sir, I thank you."

Saying which the mate went to the side and hailed the boat. Hardy kept the *York* in the wind and the barque was already in the wind, and neither vessel therefore had any way to speak of. The boat, well fended off, slobbered alongside, chucked and dived, spat and hissed like a kitten sporting with its mother. To the cry of the mate four men sprang into the chains, and were on deck with the activity of Britons boarding a Frenchman. Fine-looking fellows they were, three of them Englishmen who had been forced by Great Britain's love of foreign labour to earn their bread under the Stripes and Stars. They stared about them with sheepish grins because a woman was hard by. Had the girl been a British skipper their smileless faces would have grown as long as wet hammocks.

"Fill a drink for them, Julia," said Hardy.

Another glass was fetched, four glasses brimmed, and with a "Well, here's luck, sir," down went the doses through throats to which the aroma of cognac

was as strange a bliss as heaven to a newly arrived soul.

"Shall we make more sail for you?" said the mate.

"Not a cloth, thank ye," answered Hardy at the wheel.

So the mate and the men went forward and hoisted the outer jib and scientifically belayed the sheet, then lay aft, and did likewise with the stay-sails, hauled taut the braces, and generally made things snugger than they had found them. The dog went with them and watched their conduct with admiration.

"Well," said the mate, approaching Hardy with an outstretched hand, "we have done all you wish us to do, and I am sorry you won't let us do more. We will report you."

"I hope you won't," answered Hardy; "the owners will send out a tug in search of us, and then it's good night to my salvage."

"I twig," responded the mate, with a grave smile. "Yes, it shall be made apparent to the Old Man," meaning his captain, for at sea the captain would be called Old Man by the sailors if he were a beardless youth of twenty-two.

He shook hands with Hardy, and their grasp was cordial. He shook hands with Julia, and admired her and praised her with a look. Then the five tumbled over the side like rats from a sinking ship, gained the boat, and went away with a smoking stem to the barque. Julia stepped to the rail to watch, and when the men saw her they cheered; three times they cheered, and the mate in the stern-sheets lifted his cap and cheered whilst Julia

flourished her hand. There is much good-fellowship at sea, and English-speaking sailors are as brothers when they meet.

"Those men do not look as though they were starved and kicked," said Julia, returning to Hardy.

"If every ship kicked and starved her sailors there would be no ships afloat," replied Hardy. "All the same, there is much starvation and kicking at sea."

"How beautiful that ship looks!" said Julia; "I never saw a vessel's canvas shine so brightly. How delicate are the shadows at the edges! A sailing ship owes its life to the wind, and all the spirit of the sea is in her. Steamers are full of coals and ashes, they blacken the air with disgusting smoke, their life is compulsion, they are driven by a wheel or a screw. The sailing ship floats on wings like the sea-bird."

"All is compulsion," exclaimed Hardy, watching the keen-ended boat as she foamed sweeping with a lightning flash of wet oars to the sun, to the mother she belonged to; "compulsion hurled the universe into being, and everything is driven by it. I do not like to be compelled to be born or to die. I do not like to be compelled to carry a hump or to grow bald or hideous with age. But I am compelled into these enormities and there's no getting away from it. You must hold this wheel whilst I dip our flag when they get their boat to the tackles."

This did not take long to happen. The sweethearts watched the white boat rising out of the water, and when the little fabric was hanging at its davits the American flag soared heavenward, streaming to the gaff end.

"Hold the wheel," said Hardy, and Julia grasped the spokes.

He sprang to the signal-halliards and lowered the flag, just as you pull off your hat when you say good-bye. The American colour sank in graceful beauty and soared again, and again sank the Red Ensign to be again gaff-ended, and thrice did these two vessels salute each other and then belayed their halliards, leaving their banners flying.

A faint cheer came from the American vessel, and Hardy sprang into the mizzen-rigging and flourished his cap. Then the Yankee fell off and filled a rap-full; her wake throbbed in pulses of foam under her counter, fountain-bursts of sparkling stars of brine flashed off her bows, every stitch of canvas was mastheaded, and away she went with yearning stun-sail, a leaning vision of transcendent beauty — a spirit now, for she hath long since departed from the waters which she walked, and remains but a memory to the old.

Hardy went to the wheel, put his helm a little up, and the *York* started again for home under steady curves of canvas.

For two days after this the ship's company of three had their hands full. It came on to blow a strong breeze right ahead: they managed to brace up, and went staggering away to the west and north. It was impossible for so slender a company to put the ship about; neither could Hardy wear her, for who was to square and then brace round the yards to the hard-over helm? Every wind then must be a fair wind for that ship; she must splutter through it as best she could, and all that the two brave hearts could pray for was that it should never blow so hard as to dismast them or burst the canvas into rags.

Julia was now a practised as well as a fearless

helmswoman, and Hardy was able to get the sleep he needed; she too enjoyed plenty of intervals. In those two days it did not blow fiercer than a two-reef breeze, and Hardy eased the ship by keeping her a little away. For it mattered nothing to him or Julia if the passage home extended into months so long as they got home at last.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CAMILLA OF THE SEA

WITHIN ten weeks of the date of the sailing of the clipper ship *York* from the River Thames the vessel was about two hundred miles to the westward of the coast of Portugal. It was a leaden day. The ocean was breathing deeply after a long conflict with the gale. The swell ran in sullen masses, lifting with the lazy sickness of oil, but the breeze was light and scarcely creased the moving knolls, and the shadow of cloud hung like tapestry in a darkened chamber, low down in ragged skirts upon the winding line of the sea.

The ship looked wrecked aloft. All her spars were standing indeed, but her mizzentopsail hung in rags, and the bolt ropes made a skeleton of the fabric aft. The foresail was split in halves, and with each weary roll gaped like a cut in an india-rubber ball when pressed. Rags of the outer jib fluttered from lacing or hanks. The maintopgallantsail had been blown loose and had gone to pieces, and was shaking from the yard in lengths like Irish pennants in the rigging. The ship was rolling drearily, and the channels would often slap white thunder out of the sulky brow of the swell, and she groaned greatly throughout her length and made some dim sound of lamentation aloft.

Hardy stood alone at the wheel. He was fresh from a long and desperate fight with the sea, and you read the character of the struggle in his face. His beard was a week old: in the hollows under his eyes lay a little whiteness, the encrustation of salt; this gave him the ghastly look of the life-boat man who steps ashore after standing two nights and a day by a stranded ship with frozen figures in her shrouds. His hair was a little long, and this gave a something of wildness to his aspect. His looks were haggard, his eyes wanting in their usual lustre, his lips were pale; he looked worn. For ten days he and Julia had been fighting a gale of wind. In ten days they had managed to obtain but two or three hours sleep in a day of twenty-four hours. But happily for them it never blew so hard but that they could keep their course shaped for the English Channel. It never blew so hard that a ship well manned would have needed to heave to. It came in roaring weight upon the quarter, and one midnight the mizzentopsail burst in a blast of cannon, and shortly after the maintopgallantsail was blown into shreds out of the gaskets, and next morning, in the screaming fury of a bleaching squall, the outer jib flew into pennons from the stay, and the veil of the fore-course was rent asunder. But the reefed maintopsail, the foretopmast-staysail, and the inner jib were as faithful to their duty as Tom Bowline in the song, and the ship rushed on in foam to the figurehead, whitening acres of the sea abaft her, passing a brig hove to in the haze; passed by a ship that would not stay to speak; passed by a Fruiter schooner from the Western Islands, whose spring over the surge was the glance of the albatross, whose

envanishment in the haze ahead, into which the *York* was for ever rushing, was the extinction of a meteor in a cloud.

And now the gale was gone the sea would shortly smooth its panting breast; it was the early forenoon. Hardy called the dog, but he did not exert the powerful voice that was familiar to Julia.

The Newfoundland came out of its kennel and looked up in affectionate expectation at the sailor.

"Go below and bring her up!" said Hardy, pointing, and the dog perfectly understanding disappeared down the companionway.

His hands were almost raw with grasping the spokes. His arms were almost lifeless with their long resistance to the mulish tug of the wheel-chains in response to the kick of the rudder. His feet ached with standing, knots seemed to have been tied in the muscles of his legs; but in the gauntness of his looks was visible the spirit of a noble heart, and there was no better or more fearless sailor in the world than that grim, unshorn figure that stood alone at the helm of that reeling ship.

You will think it strange that a man, a woman, and a dog should have brought a big, full-rigged ship in safety down to the present hour through some thunderous Atlantic parallels. Yet this ship's adventure is not so strange to me as the mysterious good fortune of the ocean-tramp of to-day that washes through the Bay of Biscay without her funnel, and quietly discharges her cargo without any one feeling one penny the worse. Take, for instance, the second mate of an ocean-tramp. He walks the bridge; there are three foreign seamen in his watch, one of whom steers the ship, whilst

the other two paint her. By secret compulsion, well understood by the owner and the captain of the ship, the second mate quits the bridge and helps the two sailors to paint the ship. Who looks after the ship whilst the person in charge of her paints? The ship herself.

Or the same second mate may be on the bridge in the first watch; the foreign sailor at the wheel has been labouring almost continuously at deck-work through the greater portion of the day. The second mate for convenience has set the ship's course by a star. Suddenly he finds the star sliding slowly abeam. He rushes to the wheel and beholds the helmsman standing erect, and asleep. The second mate shakes the fellow furiously, and shouts, " Hard a-starboard! " and the sleepy foreigner, who scarcely understands the commands of the helm in English, tries to port by every spoke until he is stopped by the second mate's boot.

Is not the voyage of our every-day ocean-tramp more wonderful in the unrevealed conditions of the life of the staggering tank than this story of a full-rigged ship worked by a English seaman, an English girl, a Newfoundland dog, a watch-tackle, and a winch? I served for eight years at sea as a sailor, and I venture to say that the tramp is far more wonderful than this ship.

Sailor knew his business, and in a few minutes Julia arrived on deck. She looked ill and worn. Her straw hat was beginning to show like the end of a long voyage; her dress would have made an ill figure of her in Piccadilly. But you saw all that was necessary of spirit and resolution in her eyes.

"Julia," said Hardy, "the pumps suck with me. I feel worn out. I can't stand at this wheel any longer, and there would be no good in your attempting to hold it. I'll secure the helm, and the ship must take her chance. It'll be a dead calm before long, and we have come to a moment when a great deal must be left to fortune. Look yonder!"

He pointed on the quarter where streaks of fine weather were expanding and lifting, lines and spaces of silver blue irradiating the ragged gloom of the firmament which was moving ponderously and slowly northwest.

"You will find it cold," continued Hardy. "Go and wrap yourself up in the captain's cloak whilst I secure the wheel."

Before he had secured the helm the girl returned apparelled as commanded, for to her his word was law. He then sank down in a chair near the wheel with his chin upon his breast, and the girl went forward to boil a kettle of water.

She remained forward until some hot coffee was ready, and when she came aft with it she found her sweetheart sound asleep. It is not love that disturbs the sleeping sailor. It is love that watches and shields the repose of love, as the guardian angel the slumber of the baby. Julia looked at Hardy. How gaunt and hollow! How grim and bristly with the week's growth! Yet how peaceful in sleep, how manly in look, how dear to her; oh, how dear to her by loyal devotion, by beautiful honour, by self-respect, by his fear and his love of God!

She sat on the deck beside him and drank a little coffee, and the dog lay at her feet. The helm was paralysed by the rope which secured the wheel, and

the ship was slowly knocked by the head into the hollow of the swell; the topsail was aback, and the ship lay rolling quietly on the quieting folds with streamers of canvas swaying from the yard and from the stay.

Julia continued to sit by her sleeping lover's side for more than half an hour, leaving him once only to see to the galley fire. When again she arose to attend to the fire the dog stood up and shook himself and sprang upon the taffrail to take a look around, and before Julia had stepped ten paces the noble animal was sounding in deep tones his report of a ship in sight.

The noise awoke Hardy, who started and stood up, and Julia stayed where she was to look at the sea.

Nearly right abeam, in the midst of the lifting bright weather whose suffusion of radiance was over the mastheads, was visible the feathering of a steamer's smoke.

"It is something coming our way," said Hardy to Julia, and he took the glass, and pointed it.

His hands trembled, and he steadied the tubes by grasping the vang of the gaff with them. After a long look — Julia was at his side — he said:

"She rises fast. By her square yards I take her to be a man-of-war. If she is British she will be the help I have sometimes prayed for."

He put down the glass, bent on the Red Ensign Jack down, and ran it aloft.

"I will get you some hot coffee," said Julia. "Do you feel rested a little?"

"I am good for an eight hours' spell," he replied, but he did not look so.

She went forward, and he watched the approaching steamer, and the dog watched her also. When the girl returned with a pannikin of hot coffee Hardy had more news to give her. He first drank, then lighted a pipe, and he told her that the ship abeam, whose paddle-wheels had by this time slapped her hull into clear view, was undoubtedly a British man-of-war, and to judge by her course she was either from the Cape de Verde or direct from Rio, or some port on the eastern coast of South America.

"How do you know she is British?" asked Julia.

"By every token of yards squared by lifts and braces, by white bunt, and something white at the gaff end."

"Can you distinguish her flag?"

"It is a speck of light, but I know what it means."

"Will you accept help from her?" inquired Julia.

"Of course I will," he answered. "The Admiralty do not claim salvage, or they so hedge about the claim as to make the claimant's case prohibitory."

"How will she help us?" said the girl.

"Either by towing or sending men. But I doubt if she will tow," answered Hardy. "She may not have enough coal. She may be in a hurry to get home. The sailor is always in a hurry — God help him — and often when he gets home he finds the canary dead in the cage."

"We have no canary to greet us with its corpse," said Julia.

She picked up the glass, and inspected the approaching vessel. And so the time was whiled away until the steamer was close on the *York's* quarter, her paddle-wheels ceased to revolve, and now all about her could easily be understood without the *glass.*

She was one of that class of naval steamers which still survive (in aspect at least), at the date of the composition of this story, in the Royal Yacht, familiar in the Solent. She had a square stern, embellished with gilded mouldings and sparkling with windows. She had yellow paddle-boxes, a tall black hull with a few square gunports of a side. She was a barque, though they tried to make her look like a ship by fixing square yards without canvas on her mizzenmast and fidded topmast, which was a brigantine's mainmast with its crosstrees. For a full-rigged ship must have fidded topmast and fidded topgallantmast and royalmast, and if she has not these you may call her what you like but she is not a ship.

The steamer was H.M.S. *Magicienne*, bound from Rio to Devonport, having halted at the Cape de Verde for coal. She was full of men, as the Navy ship usually is. Here and there she was spotted by the red coat of a marine. She sparkled to the risen fine weather, and the sea was now blue to both the ships, though northwest it breathed in leaden shadow. She dipped her visible wheel in foam. The colour of her country trembled in handkerchief-size at her gaff end, and her pennon streamed in a line of silk. An officer stood upon the paddle-box and hailed the *York*. Hardy thought he could answer, and tried to do so, but found that his voice would not carry. Indeed he had been overburdened, and every function was bowed and humped.

To make himself understood he shook his head and pointed to his mouth, and flew the signal of "No voice" by pantomime. The trill of a whistle could be heard. In a few moments — moments are min-

utes, minutes are hours on board the ship of war with hundreds of a crew, as compared with the moments, minutes, and hours aboard a ship of trade with thirty of a crew — a boat-full of men with something glittering in the stern-sheets sank to the water at the steamer's side, and, as though but one oar was wielded at either gunwale, the boat came with flashful iteration of feathered blade, a pulse of sparkling locomotion each side of her, and the something that glittered astern beside the coxswain enlarged swiftly into the proportions of a midshipman twenty years old.

He gained the deck with the scrambling bounds of a kangaroo as he sprang from the rail saluting the ship with some convulsion of thumb near the bottom button of his waistcoat. His freckled face was well bred; his looks had the ardency of the youthful British sailor. You felt that here was a young man, perhaps an honourable, perhaps a lord, who at the call of duty would do his "bit," and do it well.

He stared hard at the girl whilst he walked slap up to Hardy.

"What's the matter with this ship?" said he, and his accost made Hardy feel as though he were a north-country Geordie skipper with an auld wife in the companion-hatch darning his stockings.

"I am stumpended with work," said Hardy, "and must sit, or I shall fall." And he sat down.

"You look like the end of a long voyage," said the midshipman.

"And you look as if the roast beef of Old England smokes in the gunroom," answered Hardy.

"*So help me* God, then," cried the midshipman

with heat, "nothing has fed us since Rio but salt horse. Where's your crew?" and he looked at the girl without greatly admiring her, for Julia was very draggled and broken about the hat, and dejected about the hair and white and worn, and she knew she was all this with a girl's distress.

"The crew are before you," replied Hardy, languidly pointing at the dog.

"What do you want?" said the midshipman, directing his eyes aloft.

"The help of the nation represented by your ship of state," answered Hardy.

The midshipman, who was a gentleman, perceived that the grim, unshorn, labour-wearied man on the chair was a gentleman, whatever might be his rating aboard a merchantman, and his manner changed.

"You are in a very odd situation," said he. "What a magnificent dog! What is your story, that I may return and report it to the captain?"

It took Hardy ten minutes to relate the ship's adventure, and the midshipman listened to it with parted lips, just as his face would overhang a thrilling novel which is true with all those touches that make the world akin.

"Well," said he when Hardy had finished, "I always thought going into the Navy was going to sea, but that's the real flag of adventure," he added, with a glance at the inverted ensign. "You want help and deserve it, and I'll go to the ship, and report."

He touched his cap with a look of pitying admiration at Julia. It was not the admiration of a man for a pretty face, but for the heart of a lioness.

The boat left the York and Hardy continued to

sit, and Julia stood beside him. It was fine weather above the fore-royal truck, and the gloom was thinning in the northwest. Where the brightness had broken the sea was darkening its blue; a breeze was coming up that way, and it would prove a homeward bound breeze to the *York*, with a sparkling sun to dry her and to cheer her.

"I do not think that midshipman greatly respects the Merchant Service," said Julia.

"Midshipmen occasionally condescend to us," answered Hardy, "but the majority of naval officers have good sense, and wherever there is good sense our flag is respected, because the naval officer has read history and sometimes contributes to it."

The girl looked at the steamer and the boat that was foaming to her to its dazzling line of oars.

"It is a fine service!" said Hardy, taking the steamer in from streaming pennon to the dip of the red-tongued wheel. "I might just as easily have been there as here. One is the butterfly rich with the wing of the peacock tail; the other is the plain white butterfly" — he looked afloat — "that blows like a piece of paper about the summer garden. But deprive them of their wings and you'll find their bodies very much alike."

"What are they going to do?" said Julia.

"We shall soon find out," answered Hardy. "British men-of-war are not accustomed to keep people long waiting to find out."

Though the ships lay at a fair seaworthy distance from each other, men and matters were visible to the naked eye aboard either.

Hardy saw the midshipman conversing with the commander on the bridge. He did not choose to

level a glass, it might be deemed impertinent, but he saw the commander lift a binocular to his eyes in evident wonder; certainly the gallant officer had never heard a stranger story of the sea. Officialism could not neutralise curiosity, and the man, the girl, and the dog being within easy reach of the sight helped by the magnifying lens, the commander watched whilst the midshipman talked.

What was to happen was to be speedily understood. The pipe shrilled and trilled, kits and hammocks were flung into the cutter, and in a few minutes the large boat containing twenty-one men and a warrant officer came alongside. Twelve men climbed out of her into the ship, first throwing up to a few who had preceded them their sea wardrobes and bedding. They were followed by the warrant officer — the man-o'-war's boatswain. His ruddy face flamed betwixt two red whiskers; his small, sharp blue eyes shot a bayonet glance in twenty directions in two seconds. He and his men had come to stay, and the cutter laboured to her sea mother to the stroke of five oars controlled by a helmsman.

"I'm the bo'sun of her Majesty's ship *Magicienne,*" said the flaming seaman, coming up to Hardy with a salute. "My orders are to help you to carry this ship home."

"It is very good of your captain," said Hardy, deeply moved, and smiling with an expression that accentuated the weariness of his soul, and that also emphasised the manly nature of his character, which instantly won the recognition of the boatswain because he was a sailor in the presence of a sailor.

"Do I understand your discipline? I give my

orders through you. Your men would not accept my command."

"Quite right, sir," answered the boatswain, cheerfully, "and if you will turn me to at once I will turn them men to immediately after. But I beg you won't overtire yourself, sir. And the lady has helped you! And that's a beautiful dog of yourn. A small ship's company, sir; and, begging your pardon, you and the lady both look as if a good night's rest would do you good."

"What is your name?" said Hardy.

"Harper, sir."

"Mr. Harper, will you kindly see that the men make themselves comfortable in the forecastle? You will then bend fresh sails and make all sail. I will show you where everything you want is to be found."

He sat as he spoke, and the boatswain, touching his cap, went amongst his men and executed Hardy's orders.

The two lovers watched the steamer. A man-o'-war, even when she carries paddle-boxes, is always a gracious object. Yonder ship's rails were embellished with a snow-white line of hammocks, and snow-white lines of furled canvas brightened the yards with a gleaming streak of sunshine. The full philosophy of spit and polish was to be found in that steamer. It spoke in the flash of brass; it lurked in the gleam of glass; it was visible in many colours in paint work. Every rope was hauled taut; the yards were unerringly square. The boat rose without a song, the wheels revolved, the foam of a harpooned whale fell in dazzling masses from under the *sponsons*, and the splendour of the yeast under

the square counter flamed like the rising day-star in the windows of the stern.

Hardy staggered to the signal halliards; his motions were seen — he could not salute with the distress signal. With somewhat shaking hands, therefore, he unbent and rebent the Red Ensign and hoisted it and dipped, and the courtesy found its response in the graceful sinking and heavenward soaring of the White Flag of our country.

Before the sailors came out of the forecastle, the queen's ship was on a line with the *York's* port cathead, merrily slapping her way to England.

Mr. Harper came aft. His salute was respectful, his manner sympathetic.

"If you will tell me where the spare sails are kept, sir, I will see to everything, that you and the lady may go below and take the rest you stand in need of."

Hardy told him all that was necessary, thanking him also, whilst Julia looked at the fifteen men that were gathered forward and admired their well-fed appearance, trim attire, manly shapes, and the whiskers of those who wore them. The discipline of a ship of state was in their postures, different from the longshore, lounging attitude of Jack Muck when waiting, and yet some of the best of those men had been Jack Mucks in their day; one had even been mate of a ship, and the look he sent aloft was charged with recognition of familiar conditions.

"Well, Mr. Harper," said Hardy, "I will leave the ship to you. There are plenty of provisions and there is plenty of fresh water, and there is rum for you to serve out as you think proper."

Saying this, he took Julia by the arm, conducted

her to the companion, and followed her into the cabin.

And now occurred another extraordinary incident in this ship's adventure. It had indeed once occurred visibly before, but it will not be credited in this age of the religious novel. When Hardy was in the cabin he put his cap upon the table, and going to a cushioned locker knelt beside it. Julia immediately approached him and likewise knelt, shoulders touching. When they had thanked God — and it was meet that they should thank him for their very merciful deliverance — they ate some food, drank some wine, and went to their cabins.

The sleep of the wearied mariner is profound, and the sleep of the toil-worn girl at sea is likewise profound. Hardy was the first to awake. Through the little port-hole or scuttle in the ship's side he witnessed the scarlet of the dying afternoon; he also observed the creaming curl of the breaking sea streaming swiftly past. In the plank with his feet he felt the buoyancy of sea-borne motion, the floating lift, the floating reel of a fabric winging over the deep. He shaved himself, and emerged a clean, a manly though a pallid sailor, still something gaunt but with eyes brightened by sleep, and with an expression gallant with hope and with victory.

He looked round for Julia. She was still in her cabin, and he would not awaken her. At the foot of the companion-steps lay the Newfoundland; Hardy knelt beside the noble creature and put his cheek to the wet muzzle, and the dog groaned in pleasure and gratitude. Then they went on deck together.

It was a strange, new, surprising sight to Hardy *and perhaps* to the dog: a British man-of-war's

man stood at the wheel of the ship; up and down the quarter-deck stumped the stout figure of Mr. Harper in all pomp of commanding strut. It was the first dog-watch, and some of the sailors were walking about the forecastle smoking pipes, and some of them, also smoking pipes, lurked about the galley door. A fresh breeze was sweeping down upon the quarter. The ship was under full sail from main-royal to flying jib, from mizzen-royal to spanker. The weather-clew of the mainsail was up, and — what was that yonder, right ahead? By heaven! the *Magicienne* slapping along at ten and pouring incense of soot to the very extremity of the visible universe, and the *York* was doing twelve and overhauling her with foam to the figurehead, with derisive laughter aloft, with all graceful scorn of the wind-swept structure in every leap, that brought closer yet to the eye the laborious ploughing of the paddles.

Hardy and Mr. Harper touched their caps to each other.

"This is business, sir," said the boatswain, "and this ship is going to point a moral to that there steamer!"

Hardy sent a critical gaze aloft. Everything was set to a hair and rounded firm as a boiler full of steam. Everything was doing the work of a boiler and more than the work of a boiler, as witness yonder sky-blackening fabric, like panting Time, toiling to elude the Camilla of the sea.

"Your captain has sent me some good men," said Hardy. "It did not take you long, I reckon, to bend new canvas."

The boatswain smiled loftily betwixt his red whiskers.

"It isn't all New Navy yet, sir," he answered; "but it's coming."

He sighed like a risen porpoise.

"There'll be no call for sailors when it's to be nothing but that, with pole-masts and so built"—he was pointing as he spoke to the steamer—"that a dock-master might fitly sing out to the skipper, Which end of you is coming in?"

He suddenly drew himself up as though on drill, and Julia stepped out of the companion-hatch. Sleep had touched her cheeks with a delicate bloom. She had refreshed herself with soap and water; her abundant hair was gracefully dressed; with the cunning fingers of a woman she had somehow, I do not know how, effaced in effect at least from her attire the soiling and creasing influence of hard weather upon the single robe. She had managed to warp her hat to its old bearings, and it sat cocked in its old coquettish pride upon her head. Her gaze was full of rapture as she looked at the ship, the straining sweep of white water over the side, the easy, manly figure of the man at the wheel, the *Magicienne*, which if this breeze lasted the ship must presently shift her helm to pass.

"What do you think of this?" said Hardy to her.

"Is it a dream, Mr. Harper?" said the girl. "Shall Mr. Hardy and I awaken to find ourselves on board an abandoned wreck?"

"Call it a dream, mum," answered the boatswain, "and when you awake it will be England!"

This story of the ship's adventure is told. Because what you wish and expect is bound to happen when safety and home are to be reached and realised.

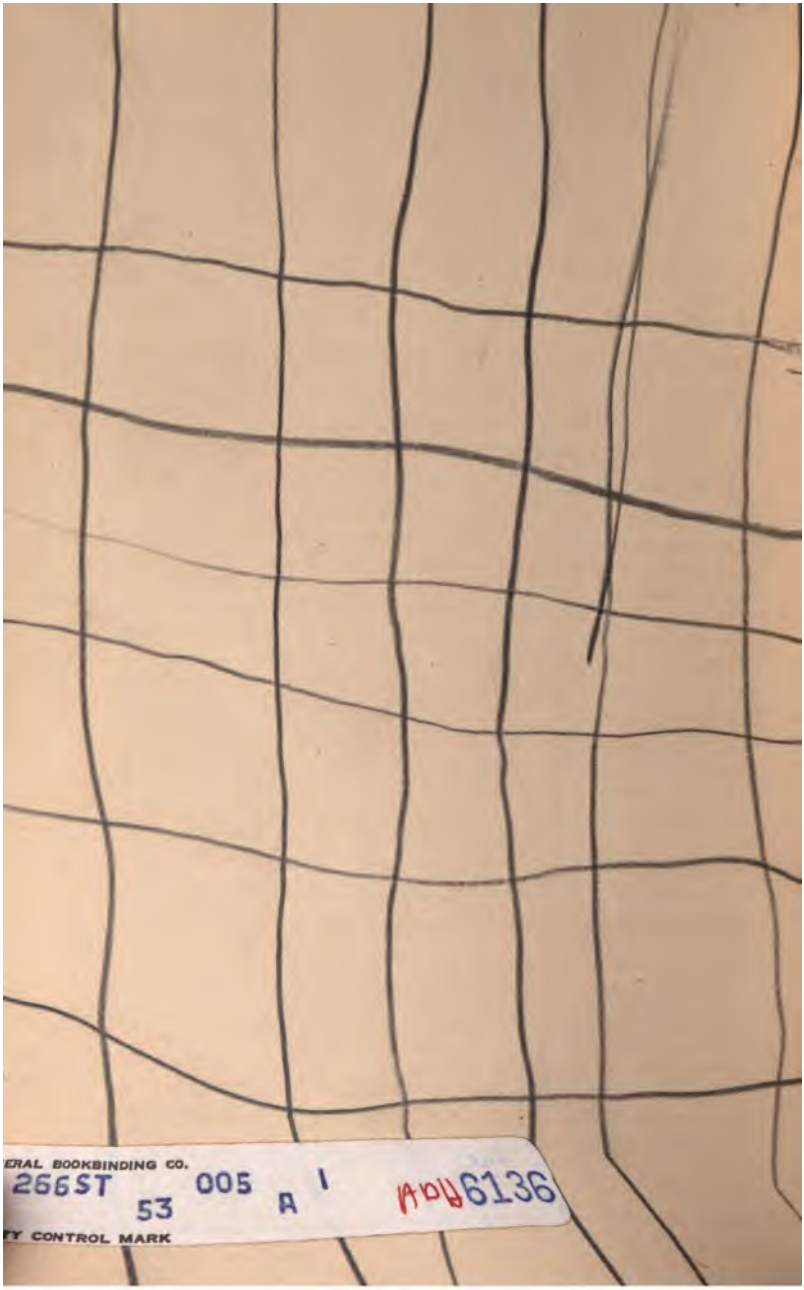
by a noble, well-found clipper ship in charge of two sailors of the manliest character, and manned by fifteen splendid examples of the man-of-war's men of the Navy of that age.

The merciful eye of God was upon this ship, for certainly the strength of our courageous couple had been expended in a long strife with the gale, and the dog, and the watch-tackle, and the winch without human help would have been of no use. Hardy would have been forced to take the first assistance that offered. It came to him in the triumphant spirit which informs the whole of this couple's adventures. Our sailor yearned for an estate for himself and for the girl that was to be his wife. He richly deserved the reward he desired. Had any ship but a man-of-war assisted him to get home the salvage claimed would have diminished his proportion to a sum which at the present rate of interest would not have yielded him the value of the pension of the retired naval bluejacket. The British man-of-war demands no salvage, and this is but just, because her very existence depends upon the safety of the British merchantman. If you extinguish the Merchant Service, you extinguish the need for a Navy and you extinguish the nation herself, because we are surrounded by the ocean, we are fed by the merchant sailor, and the bluejacket is paid to protect him whilst he brings us the daily bread for which we pray every Sunday in church, and sometimes more often than every Sunday.

I have never heard of a single instance in which the Admiralty have claimed salvage for services rendered to a British merchantman. Possibly they may have sent in a claim for the value of stores expended

in the salvage services. In the case of a successful salvage it has sometimes happened that the owners of the ship have by permission of the Admiralty presented a service of plate for the officers' mess, or they have made personal gifts to the officers and a dinner or supper ashore to the crew. Thus it will be gathered that Hardy reaped the harvest he had sown and held in view; and having said this no more need be asked, for the hand that has penned these lines has no cunning as a reporter of the Marriage Service.

THE END.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